Should I Be Worried?

By Pat Weaver

MRSA and other infectious exposures on my bus.

One of your drivers just left your office after telling you he suspects one of his passengers has a “dangerous infection,” in his words. He overheard a conversation on the bus between two passengers, one of whom had just come from the doctor’s office. He heard them say “flesh-eating bacteria” and saw a big bandage on the passenger’s arm. Your driver is worried and wants you to do something about it. He watched a TV special on “superbugs”—bacteria that can’t be killed with antibiotics, and doesn’t want to take any chances—for himself or for other passengers on the bus.

What now? How should you respond to your driver? Is there a policy that covers this? This article will define MRSA and provide some facts about any infections on your bus.

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New Changes to DOT’s ADA Regulations

By Anne Lowder

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) was enacted in 1990 based on Congressional findings that discrimination against individuals with disabilities was a major social concern. The underlying purpose of the ADA was “to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities.” ADA regulations have made a clear and significant difference in creating mobility for persons with disabilities.

About a year ago the U.S. Department of Transportation issued final rule changes to its ADA regulations, namely 49 CFR Parts 37 and 38. These are regulations affecting transportation services for individuals with disabilities. This article will outline some of these new rules. Changes that concern transit include a new definition for “wheelchair” and other powered mobility devices,

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potential danger to your drivers or passengers, and what precautions you can take to minimize risk.

What is MRSA? Is it really a flesh-eating bacteria?

First of all, MRSA is not the same as necrotizing fasciitis (flesh eating disease). Most MRSA cases don’t lead to contracting the flesh-eating disease, although it is possible in rare cases, according to Lisa Young of the Denver Health Medical Center (Young and Price, 2008).

MRSA is an abbreviation for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus.” MRSA is a type of Staph infection resistant to some of the antibiotics often used to treat Staph infection, but there are still antibiotics available to kill MRSA bacteria, according to the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

A person most likely to get MRSA would be someone in a hospital or nursing home who has other conditions making him or her sick, and is being, or has been, treated with antibiotics. Such “health care-associated” MRSA infections are more commonly seen as surgical-wound infections; however, urinary tract infections, bloodstream infections and pneumonia have been documented. MRSA is also common in general community settings, known as “community-associated” MRSA. For people who are generally healthy and who have not been in a hospital or a nursing home, community-associated MRSA infections are usually skin infections.

People who have MRSA bacteria on their skin or who are infected may be able to spread it to other people.

Are we likely to encounter someone with MRSA on our vehicles?

According to the CDC, MRSA in the community is widespread and anyone can be exposed. “A certain percentage of the population has the [MRSA] bacteria present in their system, but is doesn't necessarily cause disease,” according to Joseph Scaletta, Director of the Healthcare-Associated Infections Program at the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). The reality is that the germs can be encountered anywhere, but there are factors that are most associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections and there are steps you can take as an agency and as individuals to minimize risk.

Risk factors associated with the spread of MRSA are:

• close skin-to-skin contact,
• openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions,
• contaminated items and surfaces,
• crowded living conditions,
• poor hygiene,
• Participating in some sports, including football, wrestling and fencing.

How will I know if someone is infected?

Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause a skin infection that may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. However, the reality is that you don’t know whether a person on one of your vehicles has a MRSA infection, or any other kind of infectious disease for that matter, any more than you know if the person who just passed their grocery cart to you in the grocery store or who sits next to you at church has one.

A policy of standard precautions throughout your workplace is a tool available to you and your staff, and should be standard operating procedure in your agency to protect your employees. Universal precautions generally include frequent hand washing, avoiding hand-to-face contact, avoiding contaminated areas, handling trash carefully, maintaining barrier protection between you and the contamination, and using Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, when appropriate.

What should we do? Should we transport someone with MRSA?

In its fact sheet “MRSA and the Workplace,” the Center for Disease Control recommends that “exclusion from work should be reserved for those with wound drainage that cannot be covered and contained with a clean, dry bandage and for those who cannot maintain good hygiene practices.” Consistent with this standard, some transit agencies have adopted policies and Rider Rules of Conduct that require open wounds to be covered (see sidebar on next page for sample policies).

What other precautions should we have in place?

Good hygiene practices by employees and throughout your facilities is essential. Employees should be encouraged to cover any breaks in their skin and to wash their hands frequently with soap and water (or an alcohol-based hand rub for use on the bus). Make sure the vehicles and your facility are equipped with disinfecting surface cleaner and disposable towels.

Disinfectants effective against Staph are most likely effective against MRSA and are readily available from grocery stores. Check the label on the back of the container to be sure. For more information on cleaning, read the CDC resource listed in the sidebar below.

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) also has a good description of standard precautions:


The Red Cross produces a useful fact sheet on preventing the spread of bloodborne pathogens:

Vehicles should be equipped with bloodborne pathogen kits, and employees should be trained on standard precautions, including proper disposal of clean-up materials. Talk to your local health department or American Red Cross for available training. Encourage employees and passengers alike to avoid touching personal items that may have come into contact with infected skin, such as used bandages.

So, back to your driver who reported the suspected “dangerous infection.” Reassure that driver that you have his or her best interests in mind, along with the best interests of that passenger and other passengers. Find out as much detail as you can and document the information on an Incident Report. Ask for and document specific details from the driver to determine whether there was a likely exposure.

“Drivers are more likely to come in contact with environmental surfaces, which may be considered low risk if standard precautions are followed,” says Scala. If there is a question, follow your policies regarding follow-up with a health care professional.

Does your agency have a policy in place regarding requirements with transporting passengers with open sores and wounds, and are drivers and passengers aware of the policy? Make sure that the passenger or caretaker is aware

### Sample Policies Associated with Open Sores and Wounds

This policy is posted on the website at Valley Metro, Phoenix, Arizona. It is consistent with universal precautions, without assumption of the presence of a particular disease or condition:

**Passengers with Open Sores and Wounds**

When using the bus, passengers with disabilities who have health-related open sores and wounds need to ensure that all sores and wounds are properly covered.

Passengers with disabilities who have open sores and wounds shall be transported unless their medical condition presents a direct threat to other passengers. Any passenger, including passengers with disabilities, may be refused access to public transportation if visible body fluid leakage or dripping is occurring while at the bus stop. The passenger may also be requested to exit the bus if leakage or dripping occurs after they have boarded. Such leakage or dripping can create a biohazard to other passengers on the bus.

The existence of wounds and sores may limit securement on all securement points. The operator shall secure as many points as possible and transport the passenger.


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**Other transit systems post a simple policy on their Rider Rules of Conduct:**

“Riders are asked to follow these rules of conduct to ensure the safety and comfort of all riders and the operator:…No discharge of bodily fluids or open wounds.”


### Sources

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that a ride will be denied if open sores and wounds are not covered properly. Do you have bloodborne pathogen kits on board? Are your drivers and others with a potential for exposure trained on standard precautions?

We’ve listed some additional sources of information on MRSA on page 15. Be sure to give them a look. Another good resource for Kansas transit agencies for any questions you might have is the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE). To contact Joseph Scaletta at KDHE, call (785) 296-4090 or email jscaletta@kdheks.gov. Your county health department also can be a useful resource to you and can provide information on the availability of bloodborne pathogen training and other relevant training.

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Definition of wheelchair and other powered mobility devices

One significant change in the regulations is the U.S. DOT’s definition of a wheelchair with respect to providing transportation service. The original definition, which, by the way, is still in effect for designing a transit vehicle’s lift and securement area, relies on physical parameters to define a “common” wheelchair. The measurements are 30 inches wide by 48 inches in length and weighing no more than 600 pounds including the passenger. These provide a set of consistent parameters for designing and building accessible vehicles and equipment.

However, some transit operators were using these physical parameters as a means to exclude non-conforming wheelchairs from boarding their vehicles. Examples from Department of Justice cases include a passenger being denied transportation because her wheelchair’s foot rest exceeded the physical parameters of the common wheelchair definition, even though the chair would fit on the vehicle. Another person, who had ridden on a particular transit vehicle for years with no problems, was denied transportation one day by a driver because the combined weight of the passenger and his chair exceeded the 600 pound weight limit in the definition.

The U.S. DOT has noted a proliferation of different types of mobility devices, including some that do not meet their original definition of a wheelchair. To stem the practice of denying service, if a transportation provider has a vehicle and equipment that meets or exceeds the Access Board’s guidelines for accommodating wheelchairs, and the vehicle and equipment can, in fact, safely accommodate a given wheelchair or mobility device, the provider cannot refuse to transport the device and its user.

Specifically, regarding transportation operations, the Final Rule deletes

One ADA, Two Departments: DOJ and DOT

ADA-standards govern the construction and alteration of places of public accommodation, commercial facilities, and state and local government facilities. The Department of Justice (DOJ) maintains ADA standards that apply to all ADA facilities except transportation facilities, which are subject to similar (but not identical) standards issued by the Department of Transportation (DOT).

For more information on each set of regulations:


The new DOT regulations have a revised definition for wheelchair with regard to providing rides. The DOT definition for service animal remains the same.
The “common wheelchair” standard for operating a vehicle and deletes the sentence referencing “common wheelchair” from the Part 37 definition of wheelchair, as well as from Section 37.165(b) and the Appendix D explanatory text. The DOT definition of a wheelchair with regard to providing service is now more general:

“A Wheelchair is a mobility aid belonging to any class of three or more-wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered.” http://www.fra.dot.gov/documents/2011-23576.pdf

One caveat: A transportation provider is not required to carry a wheelchair if, in fact, the lift or vehicle is truly unable to accommodate the wheelchair and its user, consistent with legitimate safety requirements.

What are legitimate safety requirements?

“Legitimate safety requirements” in the new rule include such circumstances as mobility devices so large they would block an aisle or would interfere with the safe evacuation of passengers in an emergency.

Legitimate safety requirements must be based on actual risks. For instance, a transit provider cannot say: “Mr. Smith, that chair is oversized and might break my lift so for ‘legitimate safety reasons’ we are going to deny your trip.” In this situation it cannot be determined by looking at the chair that it will break the lift. The transit provider has speculated and generalized about the individual’s device that they use for mobility purposes. There are no documented facts that this particular device would break the lift. If you deny an individual or their mobility device, it needs to be based on facts that can be documented—i.e. the lift did break or the chair did block the aisle. Documentation and pictures should be attached. It is important to remember that the transportation provider bears the burden of proof of demonstrating denial of a wheelchair is based on a legitimate safety requirement.

It is also important to remember that the term “legitimate safety requirements” does not apply to the securement of the wheelchair. A transit provider cannot impose a limitation on the transportation of wheelchairs and other mobility aids based on the inability of the securement system to secure the device to the satisfaction of the transportation provider.

For instance, a Kansas rider has a homemade mobility device from parts obtained from a local hardware store (glued PVC pipe, coasters, etc.). The driver wants to deny the mobility device because securement is not possible. Under both the old rule and new rule the mobility device cannot be denied due to securement difficulties.

Can Segways be denied?

By the U.S. DOT’s definition, a Segway is not a wheelchair. The U.S. DOT recognizes the Segway under a category created by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in its recently-issued ADA rules. The DOJ created a category of “other power-driven mobility devices” (OPMDs). A Segway, when used by a person with a disability as a mobility device, is part of the broad class of mobility aids covered by Part 37 (similar to canes and walkers).

Transportation providers may establish their own general policies regarding Segways and other devices, just as they do with pets or bicycles. However, when a device is being used as a mobility device by a person with a mobility-related disability, the transportation provider must permit the person and his or her device onto the vehicle. This is comparable to the situation in which a transportation provider that has a general policy that does not permit pets to enter, but must permit a person with a disability to bring a service animal into a vehicle.

What is a “direct threat?”

The U.S. DOT term “direct threat” in 49 C.F.R. Part 37.3 is defined as “a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services.”

The definition of direct threat came about through cases heard by the U.S. Department of Justice. One such case had to do with three-wheeled scooters.
The complainant had been denied transportation because the scooter was a considered a “direct threat.” The ruling was that the transit provider must carry such mobility devices, noting the absence of information in the record that would support a finding that carrying non-traditional wheelchairs would constitute a “direct threat” to the safety of others. Again, documented facts are key. For more information, see http://www.fta.dot.gov/12325_4118.html.

The new U.S. DOT definition is consistent with the DOJ’s safety regulations, and is centered on whether an individual poses a significant threat to others; it does not include threats to self.

**DOJ change to the definition of service animal does not affect transit**

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) amended its definition of a service animal. The DOJ now defines a service animal as any guide dog or trained miniature horse, subject to certain limitations, trained to provide assistance to an individual with a disability. The previous DOJ rule defined “service animal” as “any guide dog, signal dog, or other animal individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability.”

Since this inclusive regulation was first issued in 1991, the DOJ has faced a trend towards the use of wild, exotic, or unusual species, many of which are untrained, as service animals. Thus, after a series of public hearings, the DOJ narrowed its definition of service to dogs and miniature horses.

http://www.ada.gov/service_animals_2010.htm

For transit operators, though, there is no change in how you define service animals because you operate under regulations of the Department of Transportation. The DOT, in the future, might parallel the DOJ ruling, but at this time it has not. The definition of service animal found in 49 CFR 37.3 of the DOT ADA regulations has not changed and is not limited to a particular kind of animal.

**Counting trip denials and missed trips**

Regarding counting trip denials and missed trips, the US DOT is emphasizing the importance for a standardized way of counting. Trip denials and missed trips should be calculated on the same basis nationwide to permit better program evaluation and comparisons across transit providers.

In some cases, counting trip denials is simple. For example, a passenger asks for a one-way trip from point A to point B and is told that ride is unavailable. The trip is considered denied because the provider declined to schedule a rider who was eligible.

However, in the case of requests for round trips or multiple-leg trips, the situation is less straightforward. Suppose a passenger asks for a round trip from point A to point B and back to point A, or asks for a trip from point A to point B, to point C, with a return to point A. If the first leg of the trip is denied or missed, the passenger can’t get to point B. Clearly, at least one trip—from point A to point B—has been denied or missed, but the DOT also considers that all legs of the trip are considered denied or missed. http://www.ada.gov/briefs/rochesbr.pdf

**Origin-to-destination service**

The U.S. DOT does not define paratransit service as “curb-to-curb” or “door-to-door.” It allows transit agencies to establish whether, or in what

Sources

Today in many transit agencies, you may find as many as four different generations working together. The Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y have matured through different periods of history but now work side-by-side to forge customer relationships and provide efficient and excellent service. Not only are transit employees from different generations, but they are likely to be interfacing with riders from different generations as well. This article will summarize the technical brief Exceptional Customer Service Across Generations: How to Manage Different Generational Dynamics to Improve the Transit System, published in a national RTAP publication. We’ll explain how the four generations approach the workplace and customer service and provide tips for transit managers.

The Silent Generation includes 35 million people who were born between 1929 and 1945. This generation was shaped by the hardships of the Great Depression and World War II, and they generally have values of self-sacrifice, patriotism and community service. Many transit volunteers who are retirees are in this generation.

Baby Boomers were born between 1946 and 1964 and grew up with a vision of unlimited opportunity. Baby Boomers are driven to compete in the workplace, and tend to define themselves by their work.

Sixty two million people born between 1965 and 1982 make up Generation X. This generation grew up during a time of economic downfall and social breakdown, divorce rates were at an all time high. Generation Xers are self-reliant, skeptical and self-sufficient and are very independent in the workplace.

Last, there is Generation Y (or the Millennials), born between the years 1983 and 2001. Raised by supportive parents, this generation is comfortable with a diverse world, as well as technology. Many Millennials grew up using cell phones and the internet, and rely on technology to get through their daily routines.

External generational dynamics in transit agencies

Based on these characteristics, this is what sometimes plays out when transit workers interact with customers:

Relating to customers. Generational research of Baby Boomers and the Silent Generation suggests that they feel 10 to 15 years younger than their actual age. Baby Boomers believe that middle age starts at 48 years old and ends at 73, while the younger generations believe middle age starts at 36 years old and see people over 57 as “over the hill.” When this is applied to customer service, it can be difficult for a 20-year-old staff member to relate to a 57-year-old customer.

Acknowledging and listening to customers. Because technology is integral to Generation Y, face-to-face contact isn’t practiced as much by them. For a transit agency’s customer service program, it is important to maintain eye contact with customers and be clear and efficient with communications, which is something Generation Y struggles with. The older generations, however, look for unspoken cues and know when they are being heard and understood. Incompatible communication styles can present problems with customer service.

Answering customer questions. Younger generations have come to expect immediate answers to questions. Thanks to the internet, the answer is just a click away. Sometimes, younger customers/riders can get frustrated if customer service representatives or drivers don’t have immediate answers to their questions.

Ways to become more generationally-savvy

Use these tips for providing excellent customer service across the generations:

Teach generational dynamics to your employees. By doing so, they will be able to broaden their perspectives on
different generations. Allow attendees to share thoughts on how they see other generations, then collectively make a list of how generational dynamics may be affecting the transit agency's internal workflow, views of customers and customer service.

Use generational sensibilities when recruiting workers. The key to recruiting workers across generations is to use words and images in job listings and recruitment ads that each generation will be able to relate to and understand.

Include generational perspectives to increase worker retention. In today's multi-generational workforce, different generations want different performance incentives and rewards. It is very important to create a performance rewards system that works for all four generations (see sidebar).

Keep learning. Great organizations make continuous improvement part of their culture. It is important to further investigate the growing body of knowledge on generational dynamics in the workforce. Start by Googling “multi-generational workforce” or go to an online bookstore and search for books on the topic. (Of course, Gen Y folks have already Googled this!)

Create generational-inspired customer icons. This is an easy way to build awareness of the different generations and can be easily done by creating four large posters, one for each generation of customer, placing key words on each poster describing that specific generation. These posters can teach and remind employees that their customers have different age-related perspectives and expectations.

Improve and develop transit services using a generational focus. Marketing a transit agency is about getting close to the customer (and potential customers). When designing new services, bring in the voice of the customer and make sure all of the generational voices are represented. This can be done by introducing staff to the generational icon posters, sharing customer satisfaction research, and mapping out different ways the customers interface with the transit system.

Assess and understand customer satisfaction by generation. In the customer satisfaction survey ask for the year the customer was born instead of an age range. This will allow the respondents to be placed in generation segments based on their birth year, and may give employees more information on the age-related needs and perspectives of different riders.

Conclusion

Training in generational dynamics in your agency is extremely important because it provides an easy way for all co-workers to understand one another better, which in return allows the work environment to be more productive. Strong and sensitive generational dynamics also builds a more empathetic, customer oriented culture.

For more information on about generational dynamics, read the technical brief in the source below.

Source

• John W. Martin, Exceptional Customer Service Across Generations: How to Manage Different Generational Dynamics to Improve the Transit System, Rural Transit Assistance Program. http://www.nationalrtap.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=2cIfLeMiyNs%3D&tabid=1524
Safety in Ten: Tire Pressure and Wear
By Anne Lowder

“Safety In Ten” is a new Kansas Trans Reporter regular feature designed as a tool for providing safety talks to your employees. This safety talk should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. To evaluate the effectiveness of this training, have each of your attendees demonstrate the skill.

Tools needed for this Safety In Ten:
- PowerPoint presentation downloaded from http://www.ksrtap.org
- This handout
- Air pressure gauge
- Tire tread gauge
- Transit vehicle for skill practice

Tire inflation considerations
Advantages of correct tire inflation. Maintaining correct tire inflation pressure helps optimize tire performance and fuel economy. Correct tire inflation pressure allows drivers to experience tire-related comfort, durability and performance designed to match the needs of their vehicles. When properly inflated, tire deflection (the tread and sidewall flexing where the tread comes into contact with the road) will remain as originally designed and excessive sidewall flexing and tread squirm will be avoided. Heat buildup will be managed and rolling resistance will be as designed. Proper tire inflation pressure also stabilizes the tire’s structure, blending the tire’s responsiveness, traction and handling.

Disadvantages of under-inflation. An under-inflated tire can’t maintain its shape and becomes flatter while in contact with the road. If a vehicle’s tires are under-inflated by only 6 psi it could lead to tire failure. Under-inflation of tires is a serious safety concern because it forces excessive flexing on the sidewalls. This additional strain on the tire can build up more internal heat, resulting in premature tire failure. Research completed by the U.S. National Traffic and Safety Administration shows that one in three cars or light trucks are being driven with at least one significantly under inflated tire. Improperly inflated tires also wear out more quickly because they put more drag on the road (rolling resistance). Because of this, the tire’s tread life could be reduced by as much as 25%. You would also experience a significant loss of steering precision and cornering stability. While 6 psi doesn’t seem like much, it usually represents about 20 percent of the tire’s recommended pressure.

Disadvantages of over-inflation. An over-inflated tire is stiff and unyielding and the size of its footprint in contact with the road is reduced. If a vehicle’s tires are overinflated by 6 psi, they could be damaged more easily when running over potholes or debris in the road. Over-inflated tires cannot insulate road irregularities well, causing them to ride harsher. However, higher inflation pressures usually provide an improvement in steering response and cornering stability up to a point. This is why participants who use street tires in autocrosses, track events and road races use higher than normal inflation pressures. But your transit vehicle will handle just fine at recommended tire pressures, and your tires will last longer.

Make checking a habit
To obtain the greatest tire life, keep tires properly inflated at all times. The “right amount” of inflation for your tires is specified by the vehicle manufacturer and is shown on either the vehicle door edge, door post, glove box door or is listed in the vehicle owner’s manual. Be sure to check your tire pressure when the tire is “cold” (has not been driven on for three hours or more), which means that the tire is at the same temperature as the surrounding air. Therefore, when a tire is “cold,” it is in thermal equilibrium and thus will give an accurate reading of tire pressure.

At a Kansas RTAP driver’s workshop, a driver told me his agency gave him a mallet to check tire pressure. If you’re a

Above: Can you tell which tire is 30 percent under-inflated? Here’s what they would look like in the morning, parked in your garage. Tough to tell, isn’t it? Tire pressure must be checked with a quality gauge because the pressure cannot be accurately estimated through visual inspection. The tire on the left is under-inflated.

Some tires have wear bars, that is, rows of nubs that are recessed into the spaces between the treads. If any portion of a tire’s tread is worn down to level with the wear bars, it is time to replace the tire. The tire at right is well past that point.

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Tire pressure and wear  
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driver accustomed to “thumping tires,” you should know that this practice is 
unreliable and unsafe. An under-inflated 
tire is extremely difficult to detect by 
visual inspection or by thumping. Utilizing 
either of these methods is an accident 
waiting to happen. Don’t guess, don’t 
thump. Measure pressure with a quality air 
pressure gauge.

Dealing with duals

A vehicle with dual tires has a hidden 
tire (inner tire position) behind the outside 
tire. The air pressure valve of an inside tire 
of dual wheel tire is difficult to reach. This 
problem can be solved by equipping the 
tire with a valve extender.

Checking the air pressure of the inside 
tires is an utter necessity and should be 
done on a daily basis. That’s because even 
if an inside tire is completely flat, it will 
be supported by the outside tire, but the 
outer tire is doing all the work. The result is 
a tire at major risk to overheat, rupture or 
have the tread releasing from the casing— 
things that can lead to a major crash.

Tread wear and damage to look for

Tires are designed to grip the road, 
allowing your vehicle to move, stop, and 
go around corners safely in any weather. 
The tread that accomplishes this wears 
out over time, but drivers can take 
precautionary steps to prolong the life of 
their tires.

It is extremely important to check tire 
tread depth for signs of wear by using a tire 
depth gauge. Proper treads allow for 
normal handling of your vehicle and help 
prevent skidding and hydroplaning.

Some tires are manufactured with a 
row of nubs built into the spaces between 
the treads—this “wear bar” that tells you 
when there is less than 1.6 mm (2/32 inch) 
of tread depth remaining. When the tread 
wears down so that it is level with the 
nubs, the tire must be replaced.

Perform regular visual inspections 
of your tires for signs of damage and 
excessive wear. Look for embedded 
objects such as rocks, nails or glass. 
Catching problems early can save you 
money and prevent sudden tire failure. 
Check your tires for signs of irregular 
tread wear, such as high and low areas or 
unusually smooth areas.

Steps for using a tire depth gauge

While a penny can be used as a tool to 
estimate remaining tread depth as a tire 
approaches the end of its useful life, the 
established and more accurate method of 
measuring remaining tread depth in the 
United States is with a gauge that reads in 
32nds of an inch (other countries measure 
tread depth in millimeters).

To properly measure tire tread depth:
1) Determine what unit of measurement 
(inches or millimeters) your tire depth 
gauge uses for measurement and make 
sure it is the same type of measurement 
as your tire tread.
2) Push the tread depth gauge against a 
hard, flat surface to confirm it “zeros out” 
when fully compressed.
3) Place the probe into the center of 
a circumferential tire groove (a groove 
that goes around the tire as compared to 
a lateral groove from the sidewall to the 
inside of the tire) and push down on the 
gauge’s base.
4) Record the tread depth reading.
5) Probe additional locations around the 
tire groove at 15 inches apart and average 
the readings.
6) Refer to the manufacturer’s information 
about what the tire depth should be to 
safely use the tire.

In sum

Incorrect air pressure can cause rapid 
or uneven tire wear. Maintaining accurate 
air pressure is an important safety and 
cost-saving practice for your transit 
agency. An accurate tread depth gauge 
reading and visual inspection of the tire 
and the tread’s depth in relation to the 
wear bars will help detect signs of wear. 
Also look for embedded objects. Early 
detection of a problem with a tire can 
save you money, increase vehicle safety, 
and prevent tire failure.

Sources

Part of being safe on the road is reading and following traffic control devices and warning signs. Railroad grade crossings pose a particular danger to traffic, but federal law requires them to be well-signed. Do you know what the signs mean? Match up the following signs and traffic control devices with their intended uses. Answers on page 14.

Refer to the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* for more information and to see images of these signs in their required colors. [http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/](http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/)

1. Used on each highway as an advanced warning of a highway-rail grade crossing
2. Used if there is less than 100 feet between a parallel highway and the tracks
3. Used in areas where trains typically have high operating speeds
4. Used in areas where trains do not use their horns as they approach grade crossings
5. Used for skewed highway-rail grade crossings
6. Used when tracks have no lights or gates
7. Used to identify a grade crossing
8. Used to communicate that no vehicles should be on the tracks
9. A combination of signs used when there is no active traffic control system
10. Used in higher-traffic areas as an active traffic control system.

If you would like a free presentation on rail crossing safety, contact Julie La Combe, Kansas Operation Lifesaver, at (785) 806-8801 or jalacombe@ksoli.org; their website is [http://www.ksoli.org](http://www.ksoli.org).

**Sources**

Can You Translate That?

By Chris Wichman

New report discusses data integration for regional mobility management.

In Kansas and around the country, transit agencies recognize the efficiency of coordinating transportation-related efforts with senior centers, school districts, health and human services and other ancillary transportation providers. Coordination offers transit providers the opportunity to expand service without increasing overhead, all the while providing the public with enhanced mobility options. A recently-released report funded by the Transportation Research Board’s Transit IDEA Program, Developing Regional Mobility Management Centers (Project 50) includes an overview of a proposed software program that could potentially aid transportation providers in regional transit coordination. This article will discuss the common barriers to data-sharing and communication among coordinating transportation providers, and introduce the proposed “universal data translator” tool for addressing these challenges.

Challenges to regional coordination

To effectively coordinate transportation service in Kansas, transportation providers in the the state’s regional pilot programs will need to find a consistent way to communicate between coordinating organizations’ computer systems about trips requested, trips provided and other necessary information. A number of proprietary software programs are on the market to handle typical transportation management data including client records, dispatching, scheduling, routing, trip records, and client billing information. As agencies and providers begin to coordinate with one another, problems may arise in sharing this data across incompatible software. Currently, overcoming incompatibility is costing additional employee hours for data re-entry and adds the opportunity for human error along the way.

Over the last few years Anne Smith, Director of Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (ATA), has made improving inter-agency data sharing a top priority. Her organization currently uses three primary software programs: Novus™ for Coordinated Services, Quickbooks™ and Microsoft Excel™. The ATAs goal is to be able to prepare their reports in the form required by the Kansas Department of Transportation while also being able to efficiently bill local partners. In practice it is common for regional agencies to have a variety of contractor arrangements with local partners depending on federal funding programs used and specifics of the service provided. Smith is continually looking for ways to eliminate duplicate data entry by integrating new techniques. She mentioned the following examples from ATA:

Service coordination requires the input and export of data from several transportation providers and human service agencies. While it would be nice to have a “translate” button on your computer to make all of that data compatible, no such option exists. A new report is investigating the idea of creating universal data translator software to address the problem.

Data delivered by ATA to local providers. One of the challenges to coordinating transit service is the process of sharing trip information among providers. Regional dispatching allows riders from various agencies to be accommodated in a single vehicle trip. After a trip is provided, the ATA commonly needs to produce an itemized trip ticket with the date, time and trip fare for the purposes of billing a local partner.

For example, the ATA partners with Kansas State University to provide rides for disabled students to and from classes. A monthly itemized bill from ATA provides the University with the eligible students’ name, the date, time, and trip detail. This invoice is used by the local partner to verify and track the number of trips provided to their students. The ATA and KSU relationship provides one
enable such seamless exchanges of data. This tool would meet three primary objectives:
1) Enable paratransit providers to communicate information about passengers with the goal of providing more rides to more users;
2) Share ride information across jurisdictional or geographic systems; and
3) Communicate information on rides between transportation agencies and their funding partners to better receive reimbursement for rides.

Such a translator would have the ability to accept data from multiple data formats: a scan of a faxed document, an email or a spreadsheet file. The translator would function as a “black box” where the multiple input formats could be read in and then output in a common format. This commonly-formatted data would then be uploaded directly into the regions’ billing or dispatching software. A simplified schematic of this process is presented in the Transit IDEA Project 50 report and reproduced in Figure 1 above.

**Conclusion**
A universal data translator could be used to address real challenges facing coordinating transit agencies. For now, basic spreadsheet software and other, more advanced, software packages are available to coordinating agencies looking to move beyond paper documents and files. Digitizing information can be a first step towards a more streamlined coordination process.

To read the full Transit IDEA Project 50 report, visit the link provided with the first resource listed below.

**Sources**
- Phone Interview with Anne Smith, Director of Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency. October 31, 2012.
ADA regulations  Continued from page 6

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circumstances, they will provide door-to-door service or curb-to-curb service. Instead, DOT uses the term “origin-to-destination” to define complementary paratransit service. The term was deliberately chosen to ensure that eligible passengers can actually get from their point or origin to their destination using the paratransit service.

In cases where the local planning process has established curb-to-curb service as the basic paratransit service mode, to meet this origin-to-destination requirement, service may need to be provided to some individuals, or at some locations, in a way that goes beyond curb-to-curb.

For instance, the nature of a particular individual’s disability or adverse weather conditions may prevent her from negotiating the distance from the door of her home to the curb. Or a physical barrier (e.g., sidewalk construction) may prevent a passenger from traveling between the curb and the door of his destination point. In these and similar situations, to ensure that service is actually provided “from the user’s point of origin to his or her destination point,” the service provider may need to offer individual physical assistance beyond the curb. http://www.fta.dot.gov/12325_3891.html

Two common questions about origin-to-destination service:

Are there limitations on the right to origin-to-destination service? In its origin-to-destination guidance, the DOT made it clear that this type of service is not an unlimited right. For example, drivers will not have to provide services that exceed “door-to-door” service (e.g., go beyond the doorway into a building to assist a passenger).

An example would be for a passenger that lives in an apartment building and needs special assistance. Does the driver need to provide door-to-door service by entering the apartment building and going down hall to the apartment? The answer is no, as long as the there is a written policy and it is followed consistently. If the passenger needs more assistance, they will need a personal attendant. Drivers will not have to leave their vehicles unattended or have their vehicles be out of their direct line of sight for lengthy periods of time. http://www.fta.dot.gov/12325_3891.html

Is advance notice necessary for the right to origin-to-destination service? DOT guidance states that is reasonable for the transit provider to ask for advance notice from the passenger of need for this assistance. In the case of a passenger who seeks this assistance on a regular basis, this notice could be provided as part of the application process for paratransit eligibility, or at the time that a change in circumstances made regular provision of assistance necessary. In the case of a passenger who seeks this assistance on an occasional basis, asking for advance notice at the time of reservation for the trip would be reasonable and consistent with the next-day service requirement of the ADA. If a passenger did not provide this notice, though, the DOT states that the transit provider would still need to make a best effort to provide the needed assistance.

Conclusion

As always, it is each transit agency’s responsibility to read and be familiar with the complete ADA regulations, including these revisions.

To read the full text of the regulatory changes identified in the Federal Register, Vol. 76, No.181, visit the Federal Transit Administration’s website at http://www.fta.dot.gov/12874_2360.html.

If you have additional questions, contact your KDOT program consultant and visit the FTA Civil Rights webpage at http://fta.dot.gov/civil_rights.html.

QUIZ ANSWERS FROM PAGE 11: 1-C, 2-D, 3-G, 4-F, 5-I, 6-A, 7-H, 8-B, 9-E, 10-J.
**PUBLICATIONS and WEBSITES**

**CDC MRSA Infections Website**  
http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/. Includes facts about MRSA, best techniques to keep areas clean and infection-free, and educational resources such as posters and brochures that can be provided to employees.

**Environmental Cleaning & Disinfecting for MRSA**  
... or check here for hard copy and order below from Kansas RTAP.

**Neighborhood Wayfinding Assessment Pocket Guide**  
Describes things to consider when walking, driving, bicycling or taking a bus or train to reach any destination of your choice. Easter Seals Project Action, October 15, 2012. Available for download at http://www.projectaction.org; under the “Resources and Publications” tab, go to the “Browse Our Resource Library” page and enter or paste the name of the publication in the space called “Title.” Click on the Search button at the bottom of the screen to see the document options for download.  
... or check here for hard copy and order below from Kansas RTAP.

**Developing Regional Mobility Management Centers**  
Explores how transit agencies might seamlessly integrate the information and capabilities of multiple software applications for scheduling and dispatching paratransit services. Transportation Research Board. November 20, 2012.  
http://www.trb.org/Main/Blurbs/168118.aspx

**ONLINE TRAINING**

**Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention Training Course**  

**Reasonable Suspicion Referral for Drug and Alcohol Testing Trainer/Trainee Guide**  

**Curbing Transit Employee Distracted Driving**  
Designed to raise awareness and reduce the risk of distracted driving by public transportation professionals. Federal Transit Administration. Information and registration at http://transit-safety.fta.dot.gov/Training/new/OnlineResources.aspx

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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

2013 Kansas RTAP Drivers Training:

Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures
February 6 in Pittsburg
February 13 in Topeka
February 21 in Hutchinson
March 14 in Emporia
March 28 in Liberal
April 4 in Salina

Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance
February 7 in Independence
February 14 in Ottawa
February 20 in Wichita
March 13 in McPherson
March 27 in Garden City
April 3 in Oakley

Train the Trainer Workshop
Feb 27-28 in Salina
March 6-7 in Lawrence

Conferences:
February 3-6, 2013
Southwest Transit Association (SWTA) Annual Meeting 2013, Little Rock, AR. For more information http://www.swta.org

February 7-9, 2013

March 1-2, 2013

May 5-8, 2013

June 2-7, 2013
Community Transportation Association of America’s Annual EXPO Conference, Albuquerque, NM. For more information http://www.ctaa.org.

**To register for a Kansas RTAP workshop, go to http://www.ksrtap.org. Click on “Register to attend.” Questions? Contact Kristin Kelly at (785) 864-2594 or kbkelly@ku.edu.