The Future of Transit Through a Different Lens

What the Government Accountability Office found after studying the Federal Transit Administration

By Clifton Hall

In July of 2014, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a study of the Federal Transit Administration’s role in providing for rural and tribal transit. The GAO is an independent government agency controlled by Congress that investigates government spending and efficiency. The Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs commissioned the study to investigate how funding is allocated by the FTA to rural and tribal transit providers, how transit activity and service have been changing, as well as the challenges these changes have presented and how providers have reacted to them. This article will describe what the GAO found about how the FTA funds rural and tribal providers, how things are changing, and how this could affect transit providers nationally. Continued on page 2

Best Practices and New Directions Highlighted at the 21st National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation

By Pat Weaver

The 21st National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation was just held at the end of October in Monterey, California. As a barometer of what’s happening in improving mobility in rural communities, in my opinion this conference is one of the best. This article will profile some of the major themes of the conference and, if you weren’t able to attend, you are provided a link to the presentations (in Powerpoint form) and information how to contact presenters for more information.

What is the National Rural Conference?
The National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation is a conference with approximately 500 rural and regional transit managers, intercity bus operators, State DOT public transit managers, planners, consultants, researchers, and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) representatives attending from around the country. FTA Acting Administrator Therese McMillan

Continued on page 5
Findings of the study

Service has grown modestly since 2009. The GAO observed that most rural and tribal providers use metrics such as population density, elderly and low-income population distribution, and existing service demand to determine the type of service to be offered. Based on Rural National Transportation Database data the GAO examined, more than 60 percent of trips are demand-response, as shown in the report’s Figure 3 (see the next page). These pre-scheduled trips are often set up appointments by the customer, allowing a degree of convenience for the transit user, and efficiency in providers’ ability to match trips and set routes to minimize vehicle miles. The GAO noted larger rural providers, such as Marq-Tran in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, were able to operate fixed-route or deviated fixed-route (which follows a fixed route, but deviates to scheduled pick-ups) transit because of similarities in trip patterns and relatively dense populations.

Rural NTD data have shown an increase in rural transit of 4 percent from 2009 to 2012; when interviewed, many representatives of state agencies, as well as local providers, said service seems to have remained level and steady in recent memory. Interviewees believed this increase is primarily because of rising elderly populations in rural areas. As people age, the ability to move becomes more difficult, as does the ability to safely operate a motor vehicle. Seniors become more dependent on family members for rides and access to services, but transit need is invoked when newly transit-dependent traveler has no family member or helper located within a convenient distance to provide transportation.

Representatives from nine of 15 state organizations and 20 of 30 local providers said a bulk of their ridership comes from transit-dependent populations: elderly persons, those with low incomes, and those with a disability. There is significant overlap in these three groups, as elderly people may be disabled, or have a low, fixed income. Interviewees said public transit was often used to link to vital services, including employment and medical trips, with one Colorado provider stating 68 percent of riders used their service to commute. The length of trips varied widely, with some providers covering small municipalities while others cover large swaths of Western states.

…but costs have risen. In contrast to the approximately 4 percent modest growth in rural and tribal ridership, operating costs for these providers has increased at a much steeper rate. From 2009 to 2012, Rural NTD data show a 19 percent rise in operating expenses when adjusted for inflation. This is reflected in rising costs per trip ($10.08 to $11.56) and cost per mile ($2.31 to $2.57), 15 and 11 percent growth, respectively. Interviewed providers pointed to fuel, wage, and maintenance costs as being the largest contributors to the overall national trend.

The GAO noted that rising fuel prices have contributed significantly to the cost increase. Twelve of 30 providers claimed this as a reason, including the Southeast Missouri Transportation System, who reported that their fuel costs doubled in the past few years because of fuel prices and increased trip length. The GAO reported that diesel has risen in price by 80 percent and gasoline prices have nearly doubled within the 2009 to 2012 time-frame. However, another large expense category, labor costs, had slower growth, and may hold steady. Eight providers noted wages have not increased, and one California transit provider has frozen its wages since 2009.

Operations, including maintenance, have become more expensive despite a wave of new vehicles being purchased. A slight seven percent decrease in vehicle age is attributed to the American Recovery Act, which prompted over 2000 new vehicle purchases in 2010 alone, largely with funding from the bill itself. These funds accounted for $263 million in expenditures in 2010, the highest level in the 2009-2012 study window.

How demographic trends may reflect future need

The phenomenon of “aging in place,” a term describing seniors remaining in their current residences as they age, coupled with younger populations leaving for more populated areas, have both caused an increase in the average age of rural areas. As this trend continues, states and the providers they coordinate will have to plan for a larger demand caused by aging rural areas. Many national aging and transportation agencies are releasing studies that reflect this trend, and the GAO itself found in a 2011 study that the transportation needs of the elderly may go unmet in the near future, especially those living in rural America. The GAO raised similar concerns in 2012, urging providers to plan for growing demand despite oftentimes scarce funding.

New challenges and uncertainties

Compliance and funding challenges. New challenges to providers are emerging in addition to
to coordinate funding through the Affordable Care Act’s state-wide brokerages, adding a layer of red-tape preventing local agencies from coordinating directly.

While a majority of local providers interviewed did not view federal compliance as daunting, over a third believed that compliance processes could be streamlined to be more integrated into day-to-day operations. FTA is also completing final rules for Transit Asset Management, a requirement of MAP-21, discussed in the Kansas TransReporter article from April 2014 (“Transit Asset Management Systems: What Are They and How Do They Apply to Rural Transit?”). The scalability of some of the more complex factors in the TAM process is a major concern of local providers, made aware to FTA through their public commenting process.

**Capital acquisition challenges.** Providers interviewed in the GAO study were generally concerned about the
Changes in Tribal Transit Funding

From 2006 to 2012, FTA disbursed on average 70 grants per year to almost 200 tribal transit systems. These grants were awarded on a competitive, discretionary basis as tribes applied, based on need, to the Tribal Transit Program. The Program is separate from the state formula programs. Short-term MAP-21 legislation increased Tribal Transit Program funding by 20 percent from $25 million to $30 million. The bill introduces a new, formulaic approach to tribal transit (based on revenue miles) that should lead to a more predictable funding stream for tribal systems maintaining similar ridership and trip patterns.

The new formula approach has increased overall funding to larger tribal providers. Of 83 tribal recipients in 2013 and 2014, 30 received at least 50 percent more funds. In contrast, 32 tribes received a grant reward reduction of more than 50 percent after the change from discretionary to formula bases. This is a reflection of the vehicle revenue miles criterion of the new formula approach, with more active providers receiving more funding. For example, the Poarch Band of Creek Indians received just $186 dollars in 2014, while the relatively large Chickasaw Nation Transportation Service (generating 1.1 million vehicle revenue-miles) received $300,000 dollars. The GAO sees this as a potential problem, because even small systems with few passenger-miles provide an essential lifeline to tribal residents.

The GAO’s observation of FTA shows a changing landscape for rural and tribal transit providers. While many day-to-day operations will remain the same, small funding changes may make a big difference for some transit providers.

Sources
attended the conference to give FTA awards to outstanding rural agencies nominated by the FTA Regional Offices. A special states’ meeting was held at the conclusion of the rural conference, with FTA staff present to answer questions from State DOTs and others interested in the specifics of FTA programs.

The rural conference has been held in different parts of the country every two years (since 1976) and is spearheaded by the members of the Committee on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation of the Transportation Research Board (TRB), with sponsoring organizations FTA, National RTAP, local hosts and cooperating organizations such as TRB, APTA, CTAA and others.

Planning has already begun for the next conference to be held in October 2016. The planning committee is working on site selection now, with final selection planned for January 2015, somewhere in the eastern part of the U.S.

Major themes of the 21st Conference
The theme of the conference was “Setting Our Course for the Future.” To address that theme, a few significant focus areas emerged from the 21st National Conference program:

- **Innovation.** Innovative approaches to planning and operations were explored to solve unique problems of rural mobility: coordination, mobility management, multi-state intercity bus service, bus safety and security marketing and outreach, to name a few.

- **The intersection of health care service delivery and rural transit.** We were able to get the latest information on the “Well-Car” prototype being developed at the University of Kansas Center for Design Research for delivery of service to rural patients, as well as learn more about the emerging use of Health Impact Assessments in transportation to identify best alternatives to contribute to community-wide health.

- **Technology solutions for coordinated service.** Attendees had the opportunity to learn about the many developments in on-board communication, innovations in GTFS (the feed specifications that drive the transit trip planners in Google) and improving customer outreach through use of technologies.

- **Serving special populations.** A session was presented on travel training programs that help to improve services to older adults, persons with disabilities, and commuters in smaller communities. Attendees also had a chance to learn about some emerging veterans’ mobility programs and tools for serving these populations.

- **Sustainability.** Topics included learning about LEED technologies being applied to improve energy efficiency of transit facilities, alternative fuels, livability measures, and transit partnerships with Federal lands and parks.

How to learn more
In all, there were more than 100 presentations, rich with content and networking, far too many to mention here. If you’re interested in learning more about the program of the 2014 conference, visit the conference website at http://www.ribtc.org. Click on “Conference Program” to see the detailed program description or on “Powerpoint Presentations” to see PDFs of the majority of the presentations.

If you’d like to contact any of the speakers, you can click on “Speaker and Moderator Information” from the Conference Program page for biographies and contact information.

Interested in the next conference?
An online call for presentations will go out in the last half of 2015 for the 2016 conference. If you’re interested in presenting and/or attending the conference, sign up for the conference email list on the home page. We’ll be in touch!

Pat Weaver, Executive Director of the Kansas University Transportation Center, is also Chair of the TRB Committee on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation and works with the Conference Planning Committee to develop the program and provide technical support to the conference.
Top Shops: RTAP’s Latest Online Training Resource is Nearing Launch

By Pat Weaver

Top Shops, the newest online training program developed by National RTAP, focuses on emergency management in vehicle maintenance facilities. It is nearing completion and should be available to you in late spring 2015. Developed specifically for maintenance managers, supervisors, and staff of small transit agencies (and their contractors), Top Shops covers preparing for, preventing, and responding to accidents and incidents that may occur in vehicle maintenance facilities. These may include personal injuries, structural incidents, fires, hazardous materials and fuel island incidents, and criminal acts.

The program was developed around seven online modules specific to maintenance facilities, the seventh of which is a managers’ online course. The manager’s course includes an overview of safety and security policies, plans, and procedures, key safety information, tips for communication, training requirements, measures and equipment needed to ensure safety and security, and key record-keeping and reporting requirements.

Top Shops can be delivered by a professional trainer, but it is designed primarily for in-house delivery by maintenance facility management. The program was developed by Jim Brock of the Dering Consulting Group and is anticipated for release by National RTAP in late March or early April. Kansas RTAP will keep you posted on its availability.

Below, one of the Top Shop modules from its managers’ course is on equipment used for security at the shop. The course is well-organized with navigation tools on the left side of the screen and key points highlighted on the screen. Each module includes a short online quiz to reinforce the learning objectives.
Subcommittees: The Worker Bees of a Transit Board

By Anne Lowder

Transit boards exist to govern transit operations and provide high-level oversight for operations. These are significant responsibilities, and are difficult to address in depth at regular board meetings. Having subcommittees on key issues can give a board the opportunity to have in-depth discussion with experts in those areas, and with stakeholders in the community. The subcommittee’s job is to develop well-considered recommendations for the full board to consider for adoption.

This article will describe some of the typical subcommittees for transit boards, how they function, and the pros and cons of forming subcommittees, by summarizing major points on subcommittees from the National Rural Transit Assistance Program Guidebook titled *Boards that Perform*.

The Basics of a subcommittee

Subcommittees are groups of persons appointed or selected to perform a function on behalf of a larger group. The duties of subcommittees are to gather information, discuss options and make recommendations to the full board. The subcommittee reports during a board meeting and helps to instill structure to keep your meeting tightly focused. The full governing board may accept, reject, or modify these recommendations using established, formal procedures.

Subcommittees address specific issues that are essential to guiding the decisions of a transit board. Members of the subcommittees can be drawn from members in your community, experts on that committee’s area of interest, staff, and board members.

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program guidebook, *Boards that Perform*, recommends that subcommittees should generally have at least three members and not more than seven. The smaller group structure allows for more open discussion on important and complicated issues. Examples of transit subcommittees are shown in the sidebar.

Examples of Transit Subcommittees

**Finance** – Addresses issues related to grants, purchasing, budgeting, cash flow, and fare structure policies.

**Personnel** – Addresses labor issues, wages and benefits, pension trust, and employee incentive programs.

**Marketing and Planning** – Addresses dissemination of public information and service development planning.

**Operations** – Addresses operational concerns such as service area, accessibility, fare collection systems, and service performance by route as well as service sector.

**Maintenance** – Addresses facility maintenance and improvement, fleet selection, fleet maintenance and storage, parts, inventory management, and other material supply concerns.

**Safety/Security** – Addresses accident performance, changing hazard and threat conditions, emergency preparedness activities, and interagency coordination.

It is important to know that all subcommittees formed by the board and reporting to the board, regardless of who is on them and whether a quorum of board members is in attendance, must follow all public meetings requirements for meeting postings, accessibility and the recording minutes.

In Finney County, Kansas, the seven members of the Finney County Committee on Aging (FCCA) board are appointed by the Finney County Commissioners. The board then appoints subcommittees such as Meals on Wheels and Transit to work on the specific issues. Bonnie Burgardt, Director of Finney County Transit said, “Subcommittees work great to eliminate long discussions on each issue during board meetings. It is in the subcommittees where issues are discussed and recommendations are made so at the board meeting they are able to vote yes or no on a
Do you ask customers that board your vehicle riding a 3-wheeled scooter if they would like to transfer to a seat? If so, you are following a recommended best practice, because 3-wheeled scooters are difficult to secure. However, if your customer does not want to move to a seat, you can’t require it per the Americans with Disability Act (ADA). To address such situations, Q’Straint, a manufacturer of securement straps and devices, has updated its securement recommendations for 3-wheeled scooters. This article outlines Q’Straint’s new recommendations.

**New Best Practice**

The National Transit Institute’s (NTI) goal for securing wheelchairs is to be able to limit the movement of the device during an incident and to protect the occupant. To meet NTI’s goal, Q’Straint recommends that 3-wheeled scooters be secured differently than the way 4-wheeled mobility devices are secured. Q’Straint’s Q5-1160 SC Scooter Securement Instructions were presented at the Q’Straint and SURE-LOK National Training Seminar in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida on October 1-2, 2014.

For a 4-wheeled mobility device, NTI best practices state that the tie-downs be attached to the same frame component of the chair (base frame member or seat frame member of the chair). Ideally, both the front and rear tie-downs should be at a 30-45 degree angle. The front tie-downs should be anchored to the floor wider than the chair to stabilize the side-to-side tilting movement of the chair. The rear tie-downs should be anchored directly behind the mobility device to help contain the chair in the securement area and limit forward and back movement.

For a 3-wheeled mobility device, Q’Straint recommends that the front and rear securement anchor configurations be reversed in terms of how wide they are set (see photo above). The securement anchor points on a 3-wheeled scooter need to flare in the rear and be narrowly set on the front of the scooter. Q’Straint instructor John Gross demonstrated why they were recommending this change by showing how following NTI’s best practice for securement of a 4-wheeled device does not prevent a 3-wheeled scooter from moving beyond what is considered safe. He secured a 3-wheeled scooter with an additional strap looped around the front column of the scooter with the two front tie-downs secured by attaching to either side of the additional strap. The front tie-down anchor points were flared. Gross was easily able to pull the scooter back and forth using that method of securement, with much more than the ADA-recommended two inches of movement.

Switching the anchor point configuration for a 3-wheeled scooter so the straps flare more widely at the rear and narrowly at the front lessons the scooter’s movement to the two inches of movement under normal vehicle operations.

**Summary**

Securement of 3-wheeled scooters is difficult because of the lack of solid frame securement points. Q’Straint and National Transit Institute highly recommend that scooter occupants transfer to a bus seat if they can and will transfer. Explain to your customer why transferring to a seat makes good safety sense. Plus, it would be a more comfortable ride.
However, agencies, under the ADA, cannot require a person to transfer. Q’Straint has provided some helpful guidance to improve safety for a passenger who prefers to remain in the 3-wheeled scooter.

**Board subcommittees**  Continued from page 7

**subcommittee’s recommendation.”**  
   The bottom line: Subcommittees bring depth and efficiency to a board.

**Pros and cons of subcommittees**  
   The pros of using subcommittees include the opportunity for more thorough research and consideration of information. Subcommittees take the varied responsibilities of the transit board, separate them and narrow them into specific issues. The subcommittee members study their assigned issues using experts in the field, discussing options and best practices with business partners and citizens, and report on their findings and make recommendations back to the board. The transit board can then use the in-depth information and recommendations provided by the subcommittees to make informed decisions.

   The cons using of subcommittees include increased staff time involved in preparing for the additional meetings and supporting the subcommittees. Important discussion of high-impact decisions may be held away from the full board.

   Some topics, such as setting the policy for the agency and monitoring the agency’s operations are better served if they are discussed by the full board at a regular board meeting.

   Another con: the potential for micro-management. Board members who serve on subcommittees may stray into wanting to take responsibility for things not within board authority. If the subcommittee is examining something more operational than governing/oversight in nature, any board member on that subcommittee needs to be careful to step back into the general oversight role once the board acts on the subcommittee’s decision and management takes it from there.

**Are subcommittees needed indefinitely?**  
   Some subcommittees are “standing,” with duties with no fixed endpoint. They exist to provide ongoing input, such as a safety and security subcommittee or a finance subcommittee. Other subcommittees may be ad hoc, appointed with well-defined charges and deadlines, after which they will cease to exist.

   Frequently boards will use ad hoc committees to research and report on recommendations for building additions/expansions, technology upgrades, or major changes in operations. It is important that the scope of the work of any subcommittee be narrowly and clearly defined by a set of detailed guidelines voted on by the board.

**What about a small agency? Do they need subcommittees?**  
   Small boards, in small communities, may not have access to enough people to create viable subcommittees. Instead, the board as a whole could function as a subcommittee. A special board meeting would be held as a work session to discuss a single topic in detail, to make a recommendation to be taken up for a vote at a future regular board meeting.

**Conclusion**  
   Warren Buffett said; “Risk comes from not knowing what you’re doing.” A transit board without subcommittees poses a risk for the transit agency and its operations. No one person or transit board can be an expert in all things transit and the needs of the community. Appointing subcommittees on specific issues, allowing the subcommittees to research and discuss the specific issues, and prepare reports and provide recommendations on those specific issues to the transit board helps the board make informed decisions. For more information, read the National RTAP resource at the link below.

**Source**


**Sources**

Corrosion and Wear in Securement Devices

Where to look for corrosion and wear, and how and why to avoid it

By Anne Lowder

Corrosion and debris can damage the L-Track on your transit vehicle and keep the wheelchair securement components from locking into place. This article will stress the need to be diligent about inspecting and maintaining your L-Track and Wheelchair Tie-Down and Occupant Restraint Systems (WTORS).

What to look for

The L-Track installed in your vehicle is constructed from aluminum alloy to help protect it from corrosion but it can still corrode when day-to-day environmental conditions such as rain, snow, ice, mud de-icing chemicals and road salt get into and around the L-Track.

The track metal is especially prone to corrosion at the points where the track makes contact with and is bolted to the bus floor. Q’Straint recommends that the gaps between the track and flooring be caulked to prevent moisture from being trapped in these areas. Trapped moisture and moist debris such as leaves lead to corrosion of the track and track bolts. The L-Track should be inspected for debris and corrosion as part of the daily pre-trip inspection. In addition, the L-Track should be inspected quarterly for deterioration (wear) of the metal around the edges of the track holes and corrosion of the track and track bolts. The bolts that secure the track to the floor are inserted in 4-inch increments. Each bolt should be checked to make sure it is tight. Replace corroded bolts with replacement parts certified by the manufacturer.

It is important to not secure a wheelchair to a corroded or a damaged L-Track. Q’Straint instructor Chris Yarber stated at a recent national training event: “Do not use a damaged L-Track but replace it immediately. A damaged track could fail during an incident.”

Check for free movement

The L-Track has several securement location options (holes) to be able to accommodate wheelchairs of different sizes and designs. The securement device locks into one of these holes and needs to move freely along the track before locking into place. Check for free movement by testing the plunger portion of the retractor securement device to make sure it can securely lock in place at each hole. If the fitting becomes stuck as you move...
Q’Straint recommends that its securement equipment on your vehicles be inspected during each pre-trip inspection and also quarterly with a complete WTORS Evaluation Report.

The company provides maintenance instructions, webinars and reporting documents on its website.

Look for fastener corrosion
The retractor component of your securement system is constructed from hardened steel and coated in zinc for maximum corrosion resistance. However, environmental conditions (the same as with the L-Track) can damage the retractor.

Also, leaving the retractor in the L-Track instead of storing it properly in its storage pouch (ideally mounted on the bus wall) can create situations where the retractor can be damaged. To illustrate, Chris Yarber told a Q’Straint class of a situation where a boarding wheelchair rolled over a retractor that was locked into the L-Track instead of being stored properly in its pouch. The weight of the wheelchair bent the pin on the retractor that secures the lap and shoulder belt. Maintenance staff used a vice to bend the pin back into place. The retractor then failed during an incident, creating an injury. Q’Straint was sued but not found liable because the transit agency had not followed manufactured-provided best practices in maintenance, inspection, and storage of the equipment, and had used damaged equipment to secure a wheelchair and wheelchair occupant.

Document your inspection
It is important to document inspection and maintenance procedures you perform on of the Wheelchair Tie-Down and Occupant Restraint Systems (WTORS) in your vehicles. Q’Straint recommends that WTORS on all vehicles not only be inspected during a pre-trip inspection but also have a complete Q’Straint WTORS Evaluation Report done on a quarterly basis. Instructions, webinars, and reporting documents for the WTORS Evaluation Report can be found on Q’Straint website: http://www.qstraint.com/en_na/training/fleet-evaluation.

In sum
Proper inspection and maintenance of your L-Track, securement devices, and straps will help prevent damaged equipment that could lead to an unsafe wheelchair restraint system. For safety and liability reasons, make sure all your transit vehicles’ WTORS are well maintained.

Sources
As a non-profit transit agency, promoting your services is less about what you do, and more about who you are. So it follows that promotion for a transit agency, and especially a small one, is less about traditional marketing, like advertising, and more about operating with the agency's values at the forefront of all of its activities.

What are ways you can effectively communicate your company's vision and mission? For a small agency, it is often best to put the marketing responsibilities into the hands of everyone. When stakeholders of your agency have common understanding of your agency's values and purpose, and are willing to work them into the community context, the goals of marketing (reaching and serving more people) becomes less of an expert task, and more of an attribute of your organization.

Many transit and human services agencies have seen developing human service coordination plans (see sidebar) as an opportunity to promote their services cooperatively, focusing on the needs of the community and how they can work together to better serve those needs. This article will show how this can work by providing three examples of coordination plans that have outreach components.

What is a Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan?

Human Services Transportation Coordination Plans are a provision of SAFETEA-LU, the predecessor to MAP-21. The federal government desired to enhance transportation services available to seniors, persons with disabilities, and those with low income by coordinating work between human services providers and transit agencies.

Coordination plans are required to receive federal funding, and must include representatives of transportation and human services agencies as well as the general public in the planning process. The enacting legislation also allowed for a mobility manager to be a federally eligible capital expense.

Coordination plans typically include information on relevant federal regulations, an overview of unmet transportation needs in the planning area, an inventory of existing transit and human services, strategies for coordinating overlapping services, and implementation and prioritization of new techniques.

Besides being required for federal funding, coordination plans provide an excellent opportunity and structure for local agencies to work together to serve their community. The plans can include ways that the cooperating partners work together to promote their joint efforts.

Examples of marketing and promotion within coordinated services plans

1) Michiana Council of Governments Plan. MACOG, based in South Bend, Indiana, has several strategies for coordinating its services with marketing. The plan calls for stakeholder meetings for discussing the potential of coordinating services and transit trips held in common by agencies, and the plan also encourages the stakeholder agencies to use their newsletters as a means of coordination and promotion. This allows the cooperating agencies to use each other's resources to reach more people who might need their services or need to learn more about services offered.

Another priority of MACOG is working with stakeholders...
to identify and coordinate area employers providing vanpool services to employees and having them cooperate to promote vanpool availability.

2) Island & Skagit Counties Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Skagit Transit, in northwest Washington State, promotes awareness of available services (dial-and-ride, vanpool, fares, etc.) on its website (http://www.skagittransit.org). Island Transit, the other major provider in the area, also gives users the ability to sign up for alerts and take transit surveys at their website (http://islandtransit.org). The coordinated plan for these agencies includes an initiative to develop awareness-based marketing campaigns to promote the ways organizations in the community are encouraging the use of transit for their customers and employees, including assistance such as bus passes, gas vouchers, and subsidies.

The plan points out that a marketing campaign could be developed to promote transit services, but should only be undertaken if transit providers are confident they can continue to operate efficiently with increased demand. The overall goals identified in the plan for cooperative marketing include: maintain financial stability, preserve existing services, expand services to alleviate overcrowding, and provide service to new areas.

3) Washtenaw County-Ann Arbor Plan. Marketing of transportation services, especially those already available to the public, was a major need identified by this plan for the Ann Arbor, Michigan area. The plan recognized that increasing customer awareness is vital to meeting customer needs. The plan recommends placing public service announcements on radio and TV, and posting them on buses and at bus shelters. It also recommends cooperative promotion of available transit through agency websites, an informational phone line, and direct mail.

In sum

By using the common goals found in a coordinated services plan, transit providers can work together with other transit stakeholders in their area, instead of competing for the same customer base. We’ve shown you just a few examples above. By acting cooperatively, transit providers can provide much more benefit to the community than if they were all acting independently. Consider partnering with other providers in your service area to share advertising costs, share responsibilities, and reach out to new clients together.

Sources

How To Reach Us

To contact one of our faculty or staff members, call toll-free (800) 248-0350 (in Kansas) or (785) 864-2595 (outside Kansas). Send correspondence to:

Kansas TransReporter
Kansas University Transportation Center
1536 W. 15th Street, M2SEC Room G520
Lawrence, KS 66045

Send e-mail messages to Pat Weaver at weaver@ku.edu or Lisa Harris at LHarris@ku.edu. Visit our website at http://www.ksrtap.org

Kansas RTAP Staff

Assistance can be obtained by contacting a Kansas TransReporter staff person at the numbers or address above.

Project Director .......... Pat Weaver
Editor ......................... Lisa Harris
Contributors ............. Anne Lowder, Clifton Hall, Pat Weaver

Other Services

In addition to publishing the Kansas TransReporter, Kansas RTAP offers a variety of other educational services. Following is a partial list of these services:

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• Program planning assistance
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Easter Seals Webinars Now on YouTube

By Anne Lowder

Have you visited the Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA) channel on YouTube? There you can watch and listen to ESPA webinars on a range of topics concerning accessible transportation, many of which are related to transit. The channel allows you to access both recent and archived webinars.

Go to https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCczvSn987XZ2bbyewwS901Q and a playlist of 12 webinars will come up. The webinars include text, photographs and narration by a variety of speakers who are experts in their fields. Transit-related topics include:

• Map 21: The New Section 5310 Program
• Transit Call Centers: A Front Line in Customer Service
• FAQ on the ADA Fixed Route and Paratransit
• Stop Announcements: Guideposts on the Path to a Successful Trip
• Transit Call Centers: A Front Line in Customer Service!
• Accessible Transit and Emergency Preparedness Planning
• Local Accessible Transit Policy Development

This screen shot shows the ESPA home page and three of the 12 webinars available at the site. To view a webinar at the site, you simply click on the title.
CONFERENCES

SWTA and NMTA Joint Conference and EXPO

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) EXPO 2015

TRANSIT RESOURCES

ADA Guide for Rural Demand-Response Transportation Service Providers

TRB’s Transit Cooperative Research Program Report 172: Guidance for Developing a Transit Asset Management Plan

Used Oil Recycling: Getting Extra Mileage Out of Your Motor Oil
This technical brief explains the different options for recycling used motor oil and provides two examples of transportation providers burning their used oil for heat. 8/14/2014. National RTAP. 6 pages.
Order below or download http://demopro.nationalrtap.org/emailResource.aspx?fileid=1019&design=1&org=a2GSpnDbrul=

Seasonal Flu Resources
The resources in this guide will help your transit agency and passengers minimize the effects of this year’s flu season through knowledge and planning. 1/8/2015. National RTAP 2 pages.
Order below or download http://demopro.nationalrtap.org/emailResource.aspx?fileid=736&design=1&org=a2GSpnDbrul=

TRAINING PROGRAMS

Transit Call Centers: A Front Line in Customer Service!
Easter Seals Project Action webinar on YouTube. March 27, 2013. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4gFSV_gtGNg

Accessible Transit and Emergency Preparedness Planning

ORDER FORM

A few of our above resources are available in hard copy for readers who do not have internet access. These resources have a checkbox in the listing. Check the item(s) you would like to receive and fill out the form below. Fax to (785) 864-3199.

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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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