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Good Ideas for Growth

Hutchinson and Emporia share insights gained from recent service expansions

by James C. Holland



Transportation agencies that have successfully expanded their services can provide valuable advice to other agencies deciding whether to expand. They can share success stories, identify problems agencies might experience with expansion, describe lessons learned in hindsight, and outline different approaches to components of the expansion process.

Transportation agencies in Emporia (Lyon County) and Hutchinson (Reno County) are in the process of expanding. This article provides insights shared by Rhonda Savage,

Executive Director of Lyon County Council on Aging, and Lisa Warner,

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Head Start Issues Long-Awaited Final Rules

by Pat Weaver

The Head Start Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued final rules that will implement transportation regulations for its local grantees. These rules appear in the January 18, 2001, *Federal Register*. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) has provided a summary of the main points of the new regulations to help decipher the requirements.

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Executive Director of Reno County's Department of Aging.

Lyon County DDS point deviation service

In 1998, Lyon County was pressed to find solutions for meeting overwhelming requests for public transit services. Lyon County's Council on Aging worked with a local planning committee of 20-plus members, drawing from local expertise instead of bringing in a consulting firm.

After approximately 16 months of pre-planning, the committee submitted a proposal to the Kansas Department of Transportation for a new, comprehensive transit system for Lyon County. The system includes a fixed route service with point deviation, complementary paratransit, and enhanced county-to-city services. Implementation of these enhanced services began in July of 2000, and should be completed in Spring 2001.

Council staff were satisfied with the way they tapped into local resources by cultivating working relationships with important entities such as County and City officials and listening to all who had input through surveys and local meetings. They took the time to put a plan together that did not necessarily meet everyone's wants but met most of the perceived needs.

The Lyon County Council on Aging used surveys to determine specific information such as stop locations, desired hours, and destinations. The staff believes that surveys are a less valuable tool for predicting ridership.

Savage sees flexible planning as a key to their success. She suggests that agencies planning to expand

should leave room to change their plans as needed as new services are implemented and refined.

Savage advises keeping funding supports in place and obtaining continual feedback from paratransit users as major elements for agency expansion success. Another indicator of success of Lyon County, per Savage, will be whether their expansion goals are realized in a timely manner.

A benefit of expanding for Lyon County was the support gained from both local county and city officials and the general public.

Reno County uses new services to meet growing demand

Reno County was also faced with growing demand for transit services. The existing public transportation services were a major source for social, employment, educational, shopping, medical, and retail trips throughout the county. At the same time that demand for service was growing, county officials recognized that their source of local funding support—elderly mill levy funds—was inadequate and inappropriate to meet this expansion.

Funds that became available during the state's fiscal years of 1999 and 2000 as part of the Kansas Comprehensive Transportation Program (CTP) served as a catalyst to develop a plan to meet the growing demand. A consultant was hired



Expansion Ideas to Remember

- ✓ Secure adequate planning assistance; e.g. a consultant or local university
- ✓ Use surveys focusing on operational specifics such as stop locations, desired hours of service, and destinations
- ✓ Place less emphasis on survey statistics to predict ridership
- ✓ Keep plans flexible
- ✓ Use and involve local resources
- ✓ Cultivate good working relationships with local governments
- ✓ Listen to all who have a stake in your services
- ✓ Keep ridership up
- ✓ Be conservative with timelines
- ✓ Develop ways to keep riders and the public informed about expansion progress

in 2000 to help prepare an implementation plan.

The biggest lesson learned by Reno County Department of Aging, according to its Executive Director Lisa Warner, was to be conservative with projected start dates and in estimating how long it would take to accomplish expansion goals. The agency hired a consultant who they considered key in assisting with local participation and "ownership" of the project, as well as other issues. Reno County discovered, however, that consultants can be aggressive in setting time frames. In hindsight, Warner stated that the agency should have increased the time allowed for the expansion process by at least a third.

Another major challenge for Reno County was handling logistics in the implementation period, during

which there was a great deal of confusion. Because the project start-up was rushed, the agency's communications with citizens suffered. Reno County lost control of making sure everyone knew the most current information about the expansion process.

Local enthusiasm and support of the community were regarded as the most important successes of Reno County's Department of Aging. Ridership has been increasing, and feedback received from citizens shows appreciation for the expanded service. The expansion enabled many citizens with access to jobs for the first time and others to become more independent in their daily lives.

For more information about the Lyon County expansion, contact Rhonda Savage at (620) 342-6119. Contact Lisa Warner at (620) 694-2911 for more information about the Reno County's expansion. ▲

Head Start Final Rule,

continued from page 1

vehicles purchased by Head Start programs must either be school buses or "allowable alternate vehicles." Allowable alternative vehicles are those that are constructed to school bus crashworthiness standards, but without the yellow paint and lettering, stop arms, flashing lights, etc., that further define school buses.

Within five years, all vehicles used for Head Start transportation, including those vehicles used by contractors, must comply with these standards. This five-year phase-in period should allow local Head Start programs to achieve full use of their current federally-assisted investments in vans and small buses.

Within three years, children

being transported either by Head Start programs or their contractors must be secured in height- and weight-appropriate child safety restraint systems. In addition, there will have to be "bus monitors" on board all Head Start transportation buses (at least one monitor per bus, with more as necessary to assist children with disabilities, etc.).

Local Head Start programs and their transportation contractors will have to abide by certain minimum qualifications for drivers, more or less resembling current qualifications for interstate commercial motor vehicle operators within the year.

There will not be a federal requirement for drivers of small vehicles to hold CDLs or comply with drug and alcohol testing. These drug and alcohol testing standards apply to drivers of larger vehicles seating 16 or more people, except where states have more stringent standards.

Head Start programs will be required to have training programs in place for drivers, other local Head Start personnel, parents, and children, addressing transportation safety issues as appropriate. Training examples provided include technical training for drivers and safety awareness training for children and parents, among others. All programs also will be required to have appropriately accessible transportation services in place for children with disabilities.

The final rules attempt to be more flexible and coordination-friendly in its provisions than a previously-released *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (NPRM). It appears that the provision for "allowable alternate vehicles" is intended to facilitate coordination with other transportation activities in the community. Head Start programs are expected to pursue coordinated transportation arrangements. In addition, the rules will allow local Head Start programs

to assist participating children and families in getting transportation through mechanisms other than directly provided or contractor-provided transportation. Furthermore, the rules exempt unplanned incidental transportation from their



Within three years, children being transported either by Head Start programs or their contractors must be secured in height- and weight-appropriate child safety restraint systems.

scope, exempt home-based Head Start programs from coverage, and provide mechanisms for local Head Start programs to seek waivers from these requirements.

To review a copy of the final rules, go to the Kansas RTAP web site www.kutc.ku.edu, and look under "What's New."

Sources:

Capitol Clips, Community Transportation Association of America, January 22, 2001;

Federal Register, January 18, 2001, pages 5296-5315. ▲

Revised Drug and Alcohol Testing Rule Issued by DOT

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 by Pat Weaver

The Department of Transportation has issued its revised rule governing drug and alcohol testing procedures (49 CFR Part 40). DOT reports that the new rule considered comments from more than 400 interested people and organizations. Most provisions of the rule, published in the *Federal Register* on Tuesday, December 19, 2000, go into effect August 1, 2001. However, there are some provisions that provide additional safeguards for employees through validity testing and a service agent accountability mechanism that went into effect on January 18, 2001.

For Kansas transit providers, some changes in the new rule may be of more direct interest to MHC, Inc., the third-party administrator responsible for oversight of collection sites, medical review officers and substance abuse professionals. However, some of the changes directly affect agency policies for safety sensitive employees and should be carefully reviewed. Here are some of the key provisions of the new rule.

SAPs and the Return Duty process

All positive tests and refusals to test have a consequence. Substance abuse professionals (SAPs) must require education and/or treatment in all such cases. The return duty process is mandatory following any violation of the rules, including a positive on a pre-employment test. The number of follow-up tests remains the same as under current rules: a minimum of

six tests in the first 12 months following return to duty.

Employers may, but are not required, to monitor aftercare for employees who have returned to work following a violation. Return duty process and follow-up testing requirements continue to apply even if workers change jobs or have a break in employment.

Changes in the collection process

All collections will be split-specimen collections, a procedure that splits the sample at the time of collection. If a drug test result is positive, this safety sensitive employee may request the second part of the urine collected as a split sample be sent to another certified laboratory for analysis. A collection under direct observation will be required following a situation in which a test is cancelled because the split specimen was unavailable, but not following a negative dilute test result. Otherwise, direct observation testing is the same as under the current rule.

An employee's decision not to drink fluids in a "shy bladder" situation will not be regarded as a refusal to test. Collectors will not require employees to remove boots, but will require employees to display the contents of their pockets.

Obtaining information from previous employers

Employers will be required to obtain drug and alcohol testing information from an applicant's previous employers over the past two years. The new rule takes steps to authorize greater use of electronic means of transmitting and storing data. The new rule

mandates use of new, clearer drug and alcohol testing forms, as well as a standard urine collection kit. "Blanket releases" for testing information continue to be prohibited.

Stand Down policy

Temporarily removing employees from safety sensitive duties after a confirmed positive, adulterated, or substituted laboratory test result, but before the MRO has verified the result (stand down) is generally prohibited. However, employers can request a waiver permitting stand down. Waiver requests must include a written stand down policy providing, among other things, for confidentiality of information about the test, paying workers during the stand down period, and expunging records of the confirmed test result if the test is verified negative or cancelled.

Role of consortia/third party administrators (C/TPAs)

With some exceptions (e.g., transmission of medical information from MROs to employers, transmission of substance abuse professional (SAP) reports to employers), employers may choose to have drug test results and other information transmitted to them via a C/TPA or directly from the MRO or other person who generates the information. As service agents, C/TPAs are not "employers" for purposes of the rule and cannot play the "designated employer representative" role for employers.

Increased training requirements for the professional

A well trained work force is vital to an accurate and fair drug and alcohol testing program. For this reason, Part 40 includes enhanced training requirements for collectors, breath alcohol technicians (BATs), screening test technicians (STTs), MROs, and

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Absenteeism at Nonprofits: On the Rise?

by Pat Weaver

Is absenteeism a problem in your agency? Have you noticed any changes in the incidence of unexcused absences by your drivers in the recent past? Do you have to scramble to find replacement drivers either because someone is late or doesn't show up at all?

According to a recent study of workplace absences by CCH Incorporated, workers at nonprofits are racking up more unscheduled absences than workers at for-profit agencies (*The Non-Profit Times*, January 2001). This study found that the overall rate of workforce unscheduled absences dropped last year to 2.1 percent. However, on the



Sixteen agency managers shared information about absenteeism in their agencies. None of the managers indicated that unscheduled absenteeism was a major problem for their agencies. Thirty percent (five man-

effective absence control program.

The typical sick leave accrual is one workday, or eight hours, per month. These leave policies are comparable to the findings of the CCH study, with an average of 11.47 sick days granted by nonprofits in 2000. CCH found that employees used an average of 6.5 of their allotted days.

Most agencies that responded to our inquiry said they provide prorated sick leave for part-time employees, although one agency noted that employees working less than half-time are not paid sick leave.

Ten agencies indicated whether they had a cap on the maximum sick leave that could be accrued. Of those reporting, 70 percent indicated a cap, ranging from 192 to 1,120 hours. Three agencies reported no limit.

A particularly interesting component of some agency sick leave policies is a year-end bonus to reward employees who have not used their sick leave excessively. For example, Nemaha County allows employees with sick leave over 90 days to be cashed in at the end of each year at 50 percent of current salary rate. For example, an employee who has accrued 94 days of sick leave will be paid for 50 percent of the four days over 90 days.

Other agencies had similar policies, although the thresholds for cashing in sick days varied. Harvey County provides a bonus for all staff without unscheduled absences or tardiness every six weeks, which they believe has reduced absenteeism.

An agency in Wichita provides an incentive for employees who have used less than four days of sick leave during their anniversary year by giv-

... human resource professionals see paid time off (PTO) programs as the most effective absence control program.

nonprofit side, the number of unexcused absences rose to approximately 2.8 percent. The CCH survey found that 41 percent of nonprofit agencies surveyed considered unscheduled absenteeism to be a serious problem.

To find whether absenteeism is a problem for Kansas transit providers, we asked the members of the Kansas RTAP email discussion list to answer a few questions about attendance in their agencies. We wanted to find out whether absenteeism is a problem with Kansas transit providers and, if it is, whether there are some model policies that have been helpful in reducing absenteeism.

agers) did state that it was a moderate problem, with illness identified as the most common reason for absenteeism among their employees.

All but one of the agencies provide sick leave for full-time employees, and two of those agencies provide paid time off rather than sick leave to be used for any purpose such as vacation, sick leave and personal time. One agency that provides no sick leave (employees must use their vacation days for time off) provides extra pay for perfect attendance on a monthly basis. CCH reported that human resource professionals see paid time off (PTO) programs as the most

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Determining Functional Ability Under the ADA

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by Arin Gustafson
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Is your transit agency currently operating or planning on operating a complementary paratransit service? If so, it is imperative that you follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. This article will explain paratransit functional ability as it is covered under ADA and some of the interpretations of requirements since implementation of ADA.

On July 26, 1990, President George Bush signed the ADA into law. The ADA is a civil rights statute that protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in all realms of their lives, including employment, telecommunications, and transportation, among others. The ADA requires that all public transit systems operating fixed routes provide complementary paratransit service for disabled persons who cannot independently use regular bus service due to their disability.

The ADA defines who is paratransit eligible and makes regulations regarding the eligibility determination process, appeals process, and service requirements. These regulations are aimed at guiding transit agencies in developing complementary paratransit systems.

Three categories of eligibility

To take advantage of complementary paratransit services, an individual must be certified as ADA eligible. There are three categories of ADA paratransit eligibility:

- Category One includes individuals who cannot navigate the system due to a disability. These individuals are unable, due to a physical or mental impairment, to board, ride or disembark independently from any readily accessible vehicle on a regular fixed route system. An individual is paratransit eligible when he/she needs an attendant to board, ride, or disembark from an accessible fixed-route vehicle.

- Category Two includes individuals with a physical or mental impairment who can use accessible fixed route transportation, but that service is not available at that time on that route. (For example, if the accessible vehicle is down for maintenance.) This eligibility category is the broadest with respect to persons with mobility impairments.

- Category Three includes individuals who have a condition that prevents travel to a boarding location or from disembarking. For example, sidewalks in the neighborhood may have no curb cuts, which could hinder a person's ability to travel to and from boarding and disembarking locations. However, factors that are not under control of the public entity providing the fixed route service, such as bad weather, are not



An evaluation by a physician or other professional may be used as part of determining ADA paratransit eligibility, but a doctor's note alone is not enough to ensure eligibility.

considerations for eligibility.

Because an individual's ability to use the fixed route system may change with differing circumstances, he or she may be eligible for some paratransit trips but not for others. For example, an individual with a mobility impairment who is able to ride accessible fixed route transportation would only be eligible for complementary paratransit transportation for particular fixed routes that do not have accessible vehicles.

An individual may be granted full, partial, or conditional paratransit eligibility on a permanent or temporary basis. Temporary eligibility is granted to those individuals who meet one of the three eligibility criteria, but only for a limited time.

For example, if road or sidewalk construction makes it impossible for a person to travel to the boarding location, then that person could be granted eligibility until the construction is finished.

An individual must meet one of three eligibility criteria to be eligible for any paratransit service (see box next page).

Dos and don'ts

Each transit agency is responsible for establishing their own process for determining ADA paratransit eligibility. There are a few regulations that must be followed throughout the determination process:

- A paratransit entity may not charge an application fee to paratransit applicants.
- If the transportation entity has not made a determination of eligibility within 21 days, the applicant must be treated as eligible and provided service until and unless the transportation entity denies the application.
- The entity must provide documentation to each eligible individual stating that he or she is ADA paratransit eligible. This documentation must include the individual's name, transit agency name, paratransit coordinator's telephone number, an eligibility expiration date, and any conditions or limitations on the individual's eligibility. All eligibility determinations must be provided in writing.
- If an individual is denied paratransit eligibility, the reasons must be specified in a written notice to that individual.
- An evaluation by a physician or other professional may be used as part of determining ADA paratransit eligibility, but a doctor's note alone is not enough to ensure eligibility.

In addition to having an eligibility process, the entity must also set up an appeals process for individuals who have been denied eligibility. The

A Case Study in Determining Functional Ability Criteria—from Lawrence, Ks.

Lawrence, Kansas is in the process of developing complementary paratransit eligibility criteria, as well as an appeals process. Karin Rexroad, Public Transit Administrator for the City of Lawrence, has been working with the city's Public Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) on developing a new fixed route and complementary paratransit system. When interviewed, Rexroad commented that the committee was concerned with following ADA guidelines exactly and that the committee was working hard to make the wording of the document easy for administrators, riders and the general public to understand.

Lawrence's Public Transit Advisory Committee had two main sources that helped in the development of eligibility requirements. PTAC hired a consultant to help with legal issues, and they used the internet to find ADA resources.

The Americans with Disabilities Act *Paratransit Eligibility Manual* is located at www.fta.dot.gov/library/policy/ADA/ada.html. Another helpful site is www.ada-infonet.org/Documents/Transportation/Paratransit~20Eligibility.html, which is the *ADA Transportation Series*. These sources helped Rexroad and other members of PTAC develop the functional ability criteria. PTAC is currently working on developing public education programs to be aimed at helping individuals who previously used demand-response services make an easy transition to fixed-route service.

transportation agency may require that an appeal be filed within 60 days of the denial. It is important that the staff person who made the decision on the initial application not be the same person who makes the decision on the appeal.

Service requirements

There are many service requirements set up by the ADA. These requirements affect complementary paratransit riders' companions and attendants, service area, service hours and days, fares, and scheduling.

Companions and Attendants.

Paratransit-eligible individuals must be allowed to bring one companion on each trip, even if the companion's presence reduces the availability for other paratransit-eligible individuals. Additional companions are served on

a space-available basis. To be considered a companion, you must have the same origin and destination point as the ADA-eligible individual.

During the initial eligibility certification process, a paratransit entity may require that the applicant indicate whether he or she travels with a personal care attendant. If an individual does not indicate the use of an attendant, any individual accompanying him or her would be regarded as a companion.

If the paratransit-eligible individual is traveling with a personal care attendant, the transportation entity must also provide service to one companion. Therefore, an eligible individual may bring a personal care attendant and a companion on any trip.

Service Area. Complementary

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Functional Ability,

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paratransit service must be available to origins and destinations 3/4 mile on each side of each fixed route corridor and within a 3/4 mile radius from the end point of the route.

Individuals do not have to live within a corridor to be eligible for paratransit service. However, if an individual lives outside the corridor, he/she must be able to get to a pick-up point within it to take advantage of the paratransit service.

Service Hours and Days. An agency's complementary paratransit service must be available during the same hours and days as the agency's fixed route service. However, service during low-demand can be handled differently than during higher usage periods. For example if an entity uses its own paratransit vans during high demand periods, it could use a private contractor during low demand periods.

Fares. The fare for an ADA paratransit-eligible user may be up to twice the fare charged to an individual paying full fare, for a trip of similar length, at a similar time of the day, on the entity's fixed route system. Transfer and premium charges applicable on the fixed route system may also be included in the fare. Companions are charged the same fare as eligible paratransit individuals. However, personal care attendants must ride free of charge.

Scheduling. Agencies can require advance notice for scheduling, but there are limits. Next day scheduling is recommended; however, an agency cannot require full 24-hour notice. ADA requires that paratransit entities permit reservations up to 14 days in advance of the desired trip date.

There are also rules regarding the availability of reservation services. An entity must make its reser-

What is a "disability?"

The Americans with Disabilities Act has a three part definition of "disability" based on the specific types of discrimination experienced by people with disabilities. Under the ADA, an individual with a disability is a person who:

- has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities;
- has a record of such an impairment; or
- is regarded as having such an impairment.

Impairment, under the ADA, is a physiological or mental disorder. Simple physical characteristics, such as eye or hair color, are not impairments. Similarly, personality traits such as poor judgement or irresponsible behavior are not impairments. Also, environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages are not impairments.

vation services available during the hours administrative offices are open. On days when offices are closed, such as weekends, the reservation services must still be available during the usual weekday hours. However, on any day, the reservation service does not need to be provided by a real person. An answering machine or other technology will do, if it is checked regularly.

The ADA defines many important rules and regulations to be followed during the development of complementary paratransit services. These regulations include eligibility and appeals processes, and service requirements. While developing a complementary paratransit program can be a lengthy process, these requirements ensure that you are meeting the needs of the people who need your services the most.

Sources: www.kcata.org, www.adata.org/index-whatsada.html, www.ada-infonet.org, *ADA Paratransit Eligibility Handbook*, by KRW, Inc. for Project ACTION. ▲

New Drug and Alcohol Rule,

continued from page 4

SAPs. This includes initial ("qualification") training, refresher training every five years (for collectors, BATs, and STTs), continuing education (for MROs and SAPs), and "error correction training" (for collectors, STTs, and BATs) following a mistake that results in a test being cancelled.

A copy of the revised rule is available at the U.S. Department of Transportation web site at www.dot.gov/ under the DOT Links button.

Kansas agencies with questions about the rule changes and implications for their programs should contact Janet Blue, KDOT Drug and Alcohol Awareness Coordinator, (785) 296-0826.

Source

Part 40 is Your Final Answer, Substance Abuse Program Administrators Association, 2001. ▲



Public Relations Key to Rural Transit Marketing Success

For a transit system, public relations may be the most important and cost effective component of the marketing communications program. Most transit systems receive broad exposure in the local press, and have exposure and presence throughout the community in both service provision and as an employer organization. Rural transit managers often have difficulty allocating resources from their budgets to support marketing tasks. However, good public relations is something every transit system, large or small, can afford.

Public relations helps you:

- 1) increase your visibility throughout the community;
- 2) improve the tone and timbre of editorial exposure;
- 3) establish a better image.

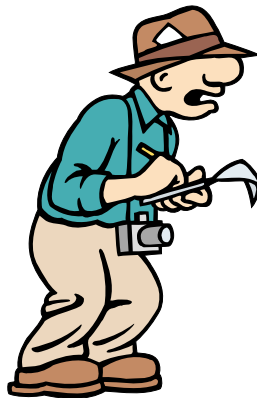
Media relations

The first and most important element of your public relations program is your relationship with the local press. Fostering relationships with the beat-writers covering transit will help with accuracy in reporting and increase the likelihood of your being able to tell your story. The bottom line in developing relationships with the media is to help the reporter look good to his or her boss.

In building those relationships:

- Take new beat reporters to lunch. This will allow you to fill them in on background information, and answer questions they might have. Don't forget that this is essentially a first interview and the reporter can print what you say.

- Never say anything to a reporter "off the record." There is no such thing.
- Do your best to make sure your facts are correct. Take the time to verify information before answering. It is okay to say, "I'll have to get back with you," but do so at your first opportunity.
- If a reporter scoops a story, don't un-scoop him or her with a press release.
- Unless it is really, really big news, don't call reporters on deadline (after 3:00 p.m.).



Never say anything to a reporter "off the record." There is no such thing. ... and if a reporter does a good job, be sure to say thank you.

- Send thank-you notes to reporters and editors for stories you consider to be well done.
- Contact reporters with stories before they call you.

Community relations

Outreach in the community is also vital to your community image. Try to attend community events such as Chamber of Commerce luncheons, Rotary meetings, and other civic events. If you or others on your staff are articulate, get on the schedule to speak at such gatherings. If there are

important community events, take the time to get involved. Develop curriculum programs with the school district on transportation issues and offer field trips touring your facility—valuable tools for building relationships with the community.

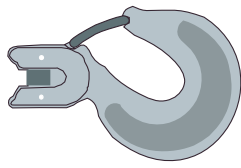
Public education

One of the greatest barriers to success is lack of consumer awareness about how to use the system and why the system is important to the community. It is important to devel-

op programs that help educate people about what the transit system does for the community.

Materials including brochures and point-of-sale items should be developed that explain verbally and graphically: "How to use the bus." Ridership will increase, and the system will be more accessible to everyone. How-to-ride information can be placed at the bus terminal, bus shelters, and on board the bus. It can be published in the local newspaper's lifestyle section, through public ser-

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In the spotlight: Wheelchair Securement

Transit system drivers are required by ADA to secure wheelchairs inside vehicles to protect the passenger and the wheelchair. Some passengers of a Denver bus system have recently complained about experiences of inadequate securement. These passengers reported that their wheelchairs were secured at only one point, sometimes with only a seat belt. They also claimed that drivers had little expertise or interest in proper securement techniques.

This article discusses two initiatives to help drivers and wheelchair occupants communicate about securement points on mobility devices. The first is a securement aid called Stokes Straps that help wheelchair occupants designate securement points on their own mobility devices. The second is a new national standard that will require all new wheelchairs and scooters to have four clearly-designated securement points. See page 12 for a further note on wheelchair occupant securement.

Stokes Straps to the Remedy

... by James C. Holland

It is essential to properly secure wheelchairs and scooters inside transit vehicles, but it isn't always easy or straightforward. Sometimes the securement points are not clearly identified on a mobility device and the driver has to guess where to

attach securement devices. "Stokes Straps," developed by Phoenix's Community Forum,* can help.

Stokes Straps were developed by Bill Stokes, a technical analyst for Community Forum, after he attended a conference session that discussed customized securement straps. He decided he wanted to try to improve on the concept. Community Forum then introduced his new product, Stokes Straps, to wheelchair users in the Phoenix area.

Stokes Straps are nylon straps that attach to securement points on wheelchairs. Once attached, they stay on the wheelchair. The straps form strong, short loops that help designate (and provide better access to) places where bus drivers should attach securement devices.

Stokes Straps are distributed by Community Forum free-of-charge. In the last six years, 650 sets have been requested. They can be used on a wide range of wheelchair types, including manual wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs, power-base wheelchairs, scooters, and specialized seating bases. Community Forum maintains a database that holds information about every scooter or wheel-

chair on the market. They use the database to identify the appropriate number and lengths of straps to send to each customer. There are just a few models that cannot accommodate Stokes Straps for 4-point securement, including some power wheelchairs and scooters that do not meet ANSI/RESNA WC-19 design specifications (see box next page).

Stokes Straps come in 11-inch, 13-inch, or 15-inch lengths. The tensile strength of the strap is 4500 lbs. The straps are made with one-inch wide Type 25 Nylon. Unless yellow straps are specifically requested, blue straps are sent. According to Donna Powers, some individuals prefer yellow straps because they are easier to see.

Stokes Straps should be inspected periodically for any cuts or fraying and replaced as necessary.

For more information about Stokes Straps, contact Donna Powers, transportation project coordinator for Phoenix's Community Forum, (602) 223-4104.

Sources

- Transit Access Report*, July 10, 2000
- Transit Access Report*, July 25, 2000 ▲

*Phoenix's Community Forum is a nonprofit organization with many community projects, including working to increase mobility and community participation for older adults and people with disabilities.

**ANSI is the American National Standards Institute. RESNA (Rehabilitative Engineering and Assistive Technology Society of North America) is accredited by ANSI to develop standards for assistive technology. RESNA is an interdisciplinary association of people with a common interest in technology and disability.



Locating attachment points for Stokes Straps

Always attempt to loop the Stokes Straps around the four strongest support structures on the mobility device. Never attach straps to wheels.

Inspect potential attachment locations to be sure they are free from sharp edges that could damage the strap.

The three general types of mobility devices require different methods of securing the straps.

For *manual chairs*, 11-inch straps are used and attachment points are usually readily accessible. Four straps will be needed—right and left front, and right and left back.

For *standard power chairs*, 11-inch or 13-inch straps are used and the attachment points should be readily accessible. Like manual chairs, the four straps for the standard power chairs will be needed—right and left front, and right and left back.

For *scooters*, because there are so many different styles available, the size of the strap (11, 13, or 15 inch) will depend on the brand and model number.

A rule of thumb in selecting an attachment point at the rear of a mobility device is to have it be no higher than 12 inches above floor level. Avoid attaching straps to the seat post; it is not designed to handle the directional pull from bus securement devices. The seat post may be the only option for rear attachment on some scooters; however, most scooters have seats with arm rests, and the tubing connecting the armrest to the seat is usually a good place to install a strap. But make sure the seat has a lock to keep it from turning. When riding the bus, the seat lock should always be engaged.

Some scooters have front bumpers that can easily accept straps. Although a Stokes Strap is not needed here because a bus hook can be attached directly to a bumper, Community Forum suggests using a strap anyway, to indicate to the bus driver exactly where on the bumper you want the bus hook to be placed.

For scooters that don't have front bumpers, the best (but not ideal) solution is to install a strap on the steering tiller as low as possible. Some steering tillers have a joint or elbow that allows the user to adjust its position. Be sure to install straps below these joints or elbows.

New WC-19 standard enhances wheelchair occupant protection

The new ANSI/RESNA** WC-19 standard has been developed to improve crash protection for wheelchair occupants in various types of motor vehicles. This standard is called *Wheelchairs Used as Seats in Motor Vehicles*. Under the new standard a newly-manufactured wheelchair must have four clearly-identified securement points that meet detailed requirements for strength, geometry, and location. This standard is expected to go into effect completely for all new wheelchairs by April 2002.

Under the WC-19 standard all securement points must be compatible with both hook-strap and strap-type tie-downs. The securement points must meet specific geometry and be located on the vehicle in places that provide maximum protection for the occupant when attached to securement devices.

Under the new standard, a wheelchair can be used safely as a regular seat in the vehicle with an optional pelvic belt and a vehicle-anchored shoulder belt. The term "wheelchair" includes standard manual wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs, power-base chairs, scooter-type wheelchairs, and specialized seating bases.

Dr. Lawrence W. Schneider, the University of Michigan scientist who led the effort to create the new standard, reports that WC-19 represents the first time the standards process recognizes the use of a wheelchair not just as a mobility aid but as a motor vehicle seat as well.

According to WC-19, a vehicle seat must be effectively secured so that it does not move significantly and/or "load" the occupant during an impact. It should provide effective seat support for the occupant in order to reduce the likelihood of the occupant "submarining" under the pelvic belt, and to optimize the performance of the seatbelt restraint system.

The purpose of the ANSI standard is to reduce the risk of injury for motor-vehicle occupants who remain seated in their wheelchair during transit, by improving the crashworthiness of wheelchairs. If a wheelchair is not secured effectively, not only could the wheelchair occupant be seriously injured during a crash, but other passengers could be struck by the unsecured wheelchair and its occupant.



What about Securing Wheelchair Occupants? Is it Mandatory?

The short answer is: It depends. Providing effective protection for riders in a transit bus involves the vehicle, the vehicle seat, and the occupant restraint system, according to ANSI/WC-19. While securing a wheelchair is required, wheelchair occupant restraints, i.e., seatbelts, are optional under ADA rules, but only if other riders on the bus are not required to use seat or shoulder belts. If passengers in regular seats are required to wear seatbelts, so must riders in wheelchairs and scooters.

Public Relations Key to Rural Transit Marketing, from page 9

vice announcements, in regionally published periodicals, tourist guides, utility bill inserts or other direct mail, and in Chamber of Commerce relocation packets.

Information also should be included outlining the benefits to the community as a whole, such as traffic reduction, mobility for senior citizens, employment circulation, etc. The general public typically believes transit serves the under-educated and underemployed. Since diesel buses emit visual pollutants, many non-users are unaware of the improvements in air quality affected by the

transit system. It is your challenge to shape that perception to one that is accurate and positively supports the system as well as the community.

Customer relations training

Training your front-line staff on how to deal with customers is a critical element of your public relations program. In most respects, your driving staff are the organization in the public's eye; how your drivers manage your customers directly affects the kind of relationship your organization has with them. In essence, customer relations—i.e., policies and procedures of customer interaction—are the tools through which you build customer satisfaction.

Good customer service benefits

everyone. The agency earns community goodwill and strong ridership from positive word-of-mouth advertising. The passenger's experience and satisfaction is greatly enhanced. But your driving staff also benefits in that they will have less stress, passengers will follow their instructions more readily, and will be more supportive in the case of accidents or helping with problem customers.

In developing your customer relations programs, it is important to recognize that you provide a *service*, that is qualitatively different than a *product* (see box below). You must also recognize that each type of rider has different needs and expectations. Their level of customer satisfaction is directly related to how well your front-line staff does in meeting or exceeding those expectations. The goal is to handle problems as soon as possible—preferably before they become problems.

In the final analysis, good customer relations comes down to effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal.

Source: Adapted with permission from *The Marketing Cookbook*, Colorado Association of Transit Agencies (CASTA) and Colorado Department of Transportation. ▲

☛ Products:

- Customer owns object.
- Goal is uniformity—all widgets look/act alike.
- Product can be inventoried; sample can be sent in advance for customer to review.
- Customer is an end user, and is not involved in production process.
- Quality control is performed by comparing outcomes to specifications.
- Improperly produced product can be “recalled.”

☛ Services:

- Customer owns a memory of the experience.
- Goal is uniqueness—each customer interaction is special.
- Service happens in a transitive moment; cannot be stockpiled.
- Customer is a co-producer, jointly creating the experience.
- Quality control is performed by customer comparing expectations to experience.
- Apologies and reparations are the only means of addressing poor service delivery.



Internet Scheduling

New rider service under development

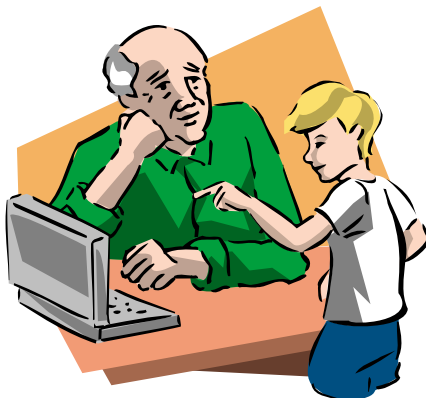
by James C. Holland

The Trapeze Software Group is developing a new way of allowing paratransit providers to let their customers book, cancel, and check on the status of their rides—via the Internet. A prototype of the software was demonstrated at the Community Transportation Association of America 2000 conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Paratransit users will be able to view the same screens viewed at an operations center by a reservation or customer service agent.

With a few keystrokes, a client will be able to receive an expected pickup time for the next day's ride. The rider will need to provide a preferred pickup or drop-off time, address of their destination, and so forth. The only thing left for the client to do will be to be ready for pick-up the following day at his or her scheduled time.

Because of the possibility that a scheduled time will change as more and more trips are booked by other riders, clients will be encouraged to monitor changes as their pick-up time approaches. With automatic vehicle location (AVL), the real-time position of the paratransit system's vehicle will be shown to the client on a map. The paratransit driver will also keep records of all scheduled trips through the use of a mobile data terminal in front of the bus.

If any delay were to occur for scheduled trips, a wireless hand-held



computer, such as a Palm Pilot, could access the scheduling editor of the booking system through the website and update the status of a client's ride location, according to Ryan J. Larsen, project manager of Trapeze Software Group.

The only requirements for paratransit users to be able to access trip booking over the Internet, according to Trapeze sales personnel, will be a typical home computer with a Web browser. There are no minimum power or speed requirements specified by Trapeze for the computer. The speed of the computer's connection, whether modem or cable, will determine the speed of the application. Larsen said registered users will access the software through a user name and password.

Riders who use this Internet booking application are expected to be able to:

- bypass staff who take calls to schedule trips (no more waiting on the phone),
- book demand or subscription trips,
- view a log of their ride histories,
- view account balances (for prepaid fares), and

Dallas to add internet option to its automated booking services

Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) plans to add Trapeze's internet booking as a new rider service within the coming year or so. DART currently uses an Ontira automated telephone booking service available 22 hours per day.

Tammy Haenftling, Assistant Vice President, Paratransit Management Services, noted that use of the automated phone system is less than projected. "Paratransit users tend to like to talk with people. They have a comfort level when talking with an actual live person," she said. However, some riders use and appreciate the automated service. "Those who use it, just love it," Haenftling said.

DART plans to use the new internet booking service in conjunction with their existing Trapeze PASS software and the Ontira phone system. That way riders will have several choices for how to schedule their trips.

- communicate with the transportation provider through forms, surveys, or e-mail.

All of this can be done 24 hours a day. However, Larsen says that trips can only be scheduled for destinations that are already in the system—i.e., destinations that have been requested previously by the computer user or another rider.

Although the service of Internet trip booking is aimed at persons with mobility impairments—a group

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Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

April 11-12, 2001
Substance Abuse Management Seminar
in St. Louis, MO
Contact: Jennifer Whalley,
Federal Transit Administration
Phone: (617) 494-2686

April 17-20, 2001
Spring 2001 National ADA Training Conference
in Washington, DC
Contact: National Association of ADA Coordinators
Fax: (800) 932-9232
www.naadac.net

May 2-4, 2001
Exploring Rural Transit Services for Your Community: National Conference for State Policy Makers, Transportation Providers, and Service Agencies

in Oklahoma City, OK
Contact Paula or Karen,
Oklahoma State University
Phone: (800) 772-4678

May 20-25, 2001
Community Transportation Association of America's Annual Roadeo and Expo
in Salt Lake City, UT
Contact Charles Dickson,
Community Transportation Association of America
Phone: (202) 661-0208
Dickson@ctaa.org
www.ctaa.org/expo

May 22, 2001
Regions 7 and 8 Workshop—
Transportation: The Vital Link
Between Employment &
Economic Development,
CTAA Expo

in Salt Lake City, UT
Contact: Charlie Dickson,
Community Transportation Association of America
Phone: (202) 628-1480 or
(800) 527-8279
www.ctaa.org/ntrc/atj/dol

June 19-21, 2001
NHI 13607; Deploying Integrated Intelligent Transportation Systems-Rural
in Topeka, KS
Contact Rose Lichtenberg,
KU Transportation Center
Phone: (785) 864-2594
rosemary@ku.edu
www.kutc.ku.edu

July 2-4, 2001
The 9th International Conference on Transport and Mobility for Elderly and

Disabled People (TRANSED)
in Warsaw, Poland
Contact: Dr. Liliana Schwartz,
Polish Association of Transport Engineers
Fax: (822) 827-0258
Schwartz@medianet.pl

September 30 -October 4, 2001
American Public Transit Association Annual Meeting
In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Phone: (202) 848-4040
www.apta.com

Editor's Note: To include workshops or meetings in our calendar, send information to Kansas Trans Reporter, KUTC, 1530 W. 15th St., Room 2011, Lawrence, KS 66045

Internet Scheduling,

from page 13

known to have a high rate of computer literacy, those who make reservations on behalf of clients with cognitive impairments also view Internet booking as convenient. With the spread of computer literacy through the general population over time, acceptance of the Internet for such applications can only increase.

In sum, Internet trip booking can offer several advantages. The rider can reduce waiting time for scheduling, maintain a continuous source of viewing transit activity, and control the opportunity to cancel a trip at any given time.

Source: "Software Provider Introduces Trip Booking Over the Internet," *Transit Access Report*, June 12, 2000. ▲

Absenteeism,

continued from page 5

ing one extra emergency day for the following year. Hourly staff can have up to five prearranged medical appointments of two hours or less per fiscal year that is not charged against their sick leave.

Reno County has gone to a system that closes the agency only on three days per year (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. For remaining time off, employees receive floating holidays that can be taken anytime, providing greater flexibility to employees who need additional time off.

With our limited sample of Kansas transit providers, it appears that unscheduled absenteeism is not considered a major problem for transit agencies in the state. Several of the agencies have developed poli-

cies to discourage abuse of sick leave by providing a "buy-back" of some portion of excess sick leave or other bonuses. While it is not known whether absentee policies or perhaps the environment of commitment in the agencies is responsible, something seems to be working.

To participate in future e-mail discussions on similar transit management issues, log on to the Kansas RTAP web site at www.kutc.ku.edu and sign up for the discussion list. More than 70 Kansas agencies or individuals are now participating in the discussion list.

Sources

"NPO Workers Taking More Unscheduled Days Off," *The NonProfit Times*, January 2001.

KSRTAP Email Discussion Group, January 2001. ▲

Resources Order Form

THESE RESOURCES are distributed free of charge, unless noted otherwise, as a service of the Kansas Rural Transportation Assistance Program. Please use the order form on this page to order the publications and videos described here. Videos are available for two-week loans; please request no more than two videos at a time.



- Transit Managers Take Trapeze, Multisystems for a Test Drive.** CT Magazine. 7 pages. A panel of transit professionals review two of the most commonly-used routing and scheduling software vendors: Multisystems and Trapeze.
- Communications 101: Dealing with the Media.** CT Magazine. 4 pages. Learn how to develop a positive relationship with the press—one that is beneficial to your agency.
- Rural Transit Service Design and Scheduling.** National Transit Resource Center. 12 pages. Discusses some of the basic considerations in rural transit service design and scheduling and in the use of computers to assist in providing transportation.



- Your Roadmap to the Internet via The Bureau of Transportation Statistics** (18min.), Bureau of Transportation Statistics, 1996. Provides a simple explanation of how the Internet works. It also lists services you can subscribe to for using the Internet, like America Online, and service-shopping hints.
- Building Quality Service: Everyone's a Customer** (20 min.). USDOT/FTA/RTAP, 1995. The goal of this training package is to help everyone in the agency understand the basic concepts of quality service in rural transit systems.
- Dazzling Transit Service: Going The Extra Mile** (20 min.), Minnesota DOT. The Minnesota DOT outlines the importance of defining customer needs in order to improve services offered by transit agencies.

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Address Correction Requested

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Please send us the inside form with corrected address information, or fax your changes to 785/864-3199.

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- Program planning assistance

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