

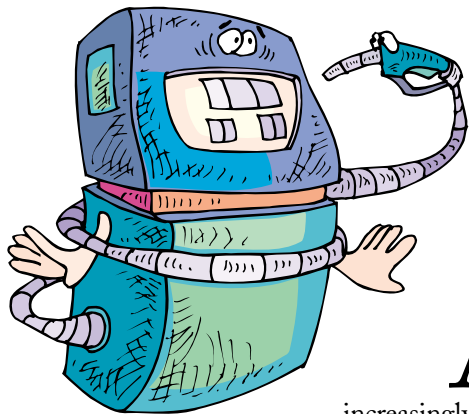


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Squeezed at the Pump?



How Kansas transit agencies are handling fuel price fluctuations

by Ira Allen

Across the United States, transit providers have been affected by fluctuating and increasingly expensive fuel and energy prices.

Fuel, heating, and cooling costs have all risen dramatically. Recently, these prices have declined almost as inexplicably as they rose, but this is no guarantee for the future.

According to the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), transportation providers are being affected in two ways. As typically happens during energy crunches, the demand for public transportation has grown recently as Americans have looked for affordable alternatives for get-

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It's Good to be F-l-e-x-i-b-l-e

Flex routing helps agencies stretch their services

by James C. Holland

Providing adequate transit service in rural America is a significant challenge. Fixed-route public transportation tends to serve high-density residential neighborhoods and traditional demand-response covering large areas tends to be extremely expensive. Rural communities often are unable to justify regular service because they simply do not generate enough rider-

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ting to work and around the community. At first glance, this is a favorable development, but transit agencies themselves are also being hit with increased fuel and energy costs. This has made it harder to address the growing demand for rides.

The energy crunches transit providers experienced in Summer 2000 and Spring 2001 are not the first of their kind, nor are they likely to be the last. It's not too early to start seeking and implementing solutions, and in fact, some Kansas agencies have already started. I conducted interviews with several members of the Kansas transit community, talking with both large and small providers (see list at right), looking for patterns in how agencies were affected, how they were addressing the issue, and asking managers to describe the solutions they've developed. The following is what I found.

How Have Providers Been Affected?

Few of these providers could attribute increased ridership to higher fuel prices. The factors that often tip the scale in favor of public transportation in large cities—sprawl, traffic congestion, and smog—are not to any great degree present in Kansas. The energy crunch has been hard on Kansas transit agencies.

For example, OCCK, Inc., of Salina, was \$9,000 over their fuel budget in the first six months of last year. Gary Rohr of OCCK said, "The fuel prices have just kicked our butts." This is not the result of poor planning skills—this is the result of unpredictable fluctuations in the price of fuel.

Bonnie Burgardt of Finney County had a similar experience. She didn't have the exact numbers in

front of her, but she said that her agency was "in the thousands of dollars" over their fuel budget.

Some agencies were not hit as hard. Lisa Warner of Reno County explained that her agency was "lucky." They recently expanded, and budgeted for the maximum potential costs. The timing worked out in their favor.

Sarah Krom of Great Bend said that although fuel prices ran her agency over their projected budget, she "wouldn't say it's been a sharp effect." Of the overall effect on Kansas providers, however, she said, "At this point there's great concern

that [curtailing services] may be the ultimate outcome."

Surprisingly, some of the smaller providers escaped almost unscathed. Rose Hutton of Chautauqua County said, "I don't know that it's affected us at all—we haven't not done anything because of the fuel prices." She also explained that her agency has been less sharply affected because of the size of their operations. As they only run buses several times a week, fuel is a much less significant factor for her agency.

Similarly, Dee Hull of Lincoln County stayed within the range of

Managers Interviewed for This Article

Rose Hutton
Chautauqua County Council
on Aging
Serving Chautauqua County,
including Sedan, Cedar Vale,
Peru, Chautauqua, and Niotaze
(629) 725-3308

Bonnie L. Burgardt
Finney County Committee
on Aging, Inc.
Serving Finney County, including
Garden City, Holcomb, Kalvesta,
and Pierceville
(620) 272-3626

Delores Hull
Lincoln County Commission
Serving Lincoln County, including
Lincoln, Beverly, Barnard,
Vesper, Denmark, Ash Grove,
Westfall, and Sylvan Grove
(785) 524-5275

Lisa Warner
Reno County Public
Transportation Department
Serving Reno County
(620) 694-2911

Gary Rohr
O.C.C.K., Inc.
Serving Saline County, including
Salina, Abilene, Hope,
Herrington, Concordia, Beloit,
Dickinson, Ellsworth, Cloud,
Republic, Ottawa, Jewell,
Mitchell, and Lincoln
(785) 827-9383

Sarah Krom
Sunflower Diversified Services
Serving Barton County, including
Great Bend, Hoisington,
Ellinwood, and Pawnee Rock;
Rice County, including Sterling,
Alden, Lyons, and Chase; Rush
County, including Rush Center,
Bison, and LaCrosse; and Pawnee
County, including Larned
(620) 792-1321

her fuel budget, but she said this was “entirely attributable to the [county’s] bulk purchasing plan” for fuel.

Why this disparity? Why are some providers scrambling to find ways to continue services while others have experienced next to no difficulties? Part of it comes down to luck, and part is due to agency size and function. Finney County, like many agencies around Kansas, does much more than provide transit services. Some of the extra costs they have experienced came from heating and cooling a large facility that caters to senior citizens in the community. OCCCK is in a similar situation.

Many factors affect the fuel budget, and each provider has experienced the recent energy crunch differently. Kansas providers have found some common ground, however, in the ways they have weathered the storm.

Weathering the Storm

Most of the providers I spoke with assured me that they were making it, one way or another, but expressed concern about the fate of other agencies. This concern for other agencies was a factor in how some of the transit providers combated high fuel prices.

In Reno County, Lisa Warner has been working with the developmental disabilities agency and with Rice County to coordinate services and reduce duplication of services.

“It’s an effort Kansas has been working on for a long time,” Warner said. “There are some obstacles that need to be overcome—and one of them is turf.” Higher fuel prices have encouraged this sort of cooperation among providers.

Others have taken different measures. In Salina, OCCCK ridership was up 17 percent the last time Gary Rohr checked, and roughly 65 percent of that ridership consisted of people coming and going to jobs.

With this in mind, he “rerouted a lot.” No services were cut, but areas that had previously been covered by several buses were streamlined and assigned to one bus. OCCCK tries to use its smaller vehicles as much as possible, as they use less gas. In addition to these measures, OCCCK has been phasing out older, gas-guzzling vehicles and purchasing newer, fuel-efficient ones.

In Great Bend, Sarah Krom used another strategy to offset high fuel costs: she assigned more overtime hours to drivers already on the payroll. This allowed her to meet increased demand without hiring new staff.

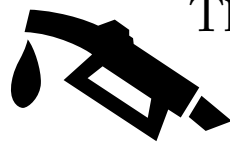
Smaller transit agencies are also using creative cost-cutting measures to cope with high and fluctuating fuel

probably increase fares.” She also tries to use their smaller vehicle most of the time because the 20-passenger bus “just eats fuel.”

Long-term Solutions?

Kansas’s transit agencies are overcoming difficulties due to fuel prices, and prices have receded significantly for the present, but there is no guarantee that they have stopped fluctuating. As Dee Hull said, “look for it to be more of a problem as time goes by.” So if fuel prices remain troublesome or become an even greater problem, what is the solution?

Unfortunately, there is not a comprehensive solution for the nation or for Kansas. Although President Bush’s energy plans promise to provide a solution, it lies



There are some obstacles that need to be overcome—and one of them is turf. Higher fuel prices have encouraged cooperation among transportation providers.

prices. In Finney County, Bonnie Burgardt dipped into her agency’s emergency reserve funds. She also had to cut a full-time driver position to two part-time positions, using the money that had been set aside for his benefits to help pay their salaries.

Rose Hutton was resigned to simply paying the bills as best she could.

In Lincoln County, they are reviewing their fare structure. Dee Hull said, “We will never cut services—we’ll just have to be more creative in coming up with funds.” Because Lincoln County fares have not risen in 10 years, Hull said, “Our plan is to

in the unforeseeable future if it exists at all. For now, solutions lie in the hands of providers in Kansas, in cooperation with federal, state, and local governments.

The Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) has taken steps to help agencies offset fuel costs, providing extra funds for fuel for all the providers with whom I spoke. While this is deeply appreciated, a long-lasting solution cannot consist only of throwing money at the problem, as helpful and necessary as that money is in the short-term. Bonnie Burgardt said of the fuel

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ship. However, a point-deviation service called “flex-routing,” may be a great alternative for some rural communities.

Flex-routing is a hybrid of fixed-route and demand-response service. A flex-route has fixed stops at designated times but, between two scheduled stops, drivers can pick up and drop off passengers with reservations over a dispersed area. An urban or suburban fixed-route provider can add an additional flex-routing service to accommodate needs of less-mobile riders. In rural areas, a flex-route sometimes focuses on paratransit service and then makes provisions for the general public. Depending on the bus features and passenger needs, the flex-route system sometimes can be implemented by using the same bus as the fixed-route system.

Advantages of Flex-Routing

Some benefits of flex-routing are:

Accessibility. An advantage of flex-routing is the ability to provide accessible transportation for disabled riders in fixed-route areas. ADA requirements do not require accessible services where no service currently exists, but when there is existing service, it must meet the accessibility standard of the USDOT.

Demand Response Less Expensive. Flex-routing allows a rural transit provider a less expensive option for providing effective transit service than fixed route. With no logical route pattern, service prices would be extreme for these dispersed origins for a rural fixed-route. Flex-routing also provides “curb to curb” service for riders with disabilities. A fixed-route usually just transports passengers to its regular bus stops.

More Potential Riders. With flex-

routing, more services can be offered by combining clients funded through agencies contracted by the transit operator and those who would pay for a private transportation service.

New Revenue. Under flex-routing, the general public can also be served in seats not taken by funded clients. General public fare revenue can contribute to existing expenses with no new costs gained.

Examples of Flex Routes

According to Brian Engelking, marketing director of Waukesha (WI) Metro Transit, a suburb of Milwaukee, the Route 304 Pewaukee Flex Route is a suburban and rural bus system that also shares the bus with the fixed-route system. It transports passengers to office parks, retail sites, recreational sites, etc.

“As the regular fixed route serves its daily destinations Monday through Friday, riders wanting to participate in the flex-route can call at least one hour in advance and request a ride to their destinations as long as it remains in the flex-route boundaries,” stated Engelking.

Normally, he added, the flex-route acts more like an “employment shuttle” for passengers who work in businesses in office parks. These parks are about a mile long. Waukesha’s flex-route service also provides transportation for disabled passengers. The buses are fully accessible, with a wheelchair lift and proper seating dimensions.

Engelking mentioned that it’s in the system’s best interest to drop off passengers requesting flex-routing at the driveways of their destinations. By doing so they provide a more a more customer-friendly system that increases safety by placing passengers closer to destinations in areas where there are a few sidewalks. The service also better serves the mobility needs of passengers with disabilities.

The only disadvantages noted by Engelking were that it takes a lot more operational work when requesting rides outside of the fixed route. The driver must work with a dispatcher so that he or she can pick up and drop off flex-route passengers while covering the fixed schedule.

Schmittty and Sons is a company contracted by Minnesota Valley Transit Authority to perform its flex-routing service. Connie Hatter, transit manager of Schmittty and Sons, stated that this flex-route serves a four-city suburban and rural area of Minnesota (Burnsville, Savage, Apple Valley, and Rosemont). Hatter added that the flex-route service is provided for passengers with disabilities as well as the general public, as long as the passenger’s destination is three-quarters of a mile on either side of the fixed route.

Like Waukesha, Schmittty and Sons’ flex route uses the same bus for fixed route service. To schedule a ride for the flex-route system, passengers must call at least two hours ahead of time. Passengers can reserve trips up to a month ahead.

Advantages mentioned by Hatter were that the flex-route system serves passengers who normally cannot get to a fixed bus stop due to a disability. A disadvantage is that the flex-route system can only serve a limited number of passengers because it is combined with their fixed-route service.

Sources: “Flexible Routes in Rural Communities,” *Project Action Update: Accessible Transportation in our Nation*, Spring 2001;

www.unm.edu/~atr/Moving-Forward-4.pdf;

www.projectaction.org/newdlist/20-0200%20Flexroute.pdf. ▲



What is “Reasonable Suspicion?”

Before you jump to conclusions about suspected staff drug or alcohol abuse, make sure your suspicion is well-grounded.

by Tim Harris and Ira Allen

How comfortable are you in making the call to send an employee for a drug or alcohol test? Drug and alcohol testing requirements of the Federal Transit Administration may require a lot of attention to detail, but, for the most part, they are extremely clear about when drivers or people in other safety-sensitive positions should be tested. When you are contacted by the drug and alcohol testing administrator to send an employee for a random test, you send him or her. If one of your vehicles is in an incident in which someone is injured, you send the driver for a test.

But what about reasonable suspicion testing? Do you know what to look for? Do you know how to be equitable and document information properly so that you reduce the chances that you’ll be charged with trying to “get” someone? What exactly is *reasonable* suspicion? Tim Harris of the Mental Health Consortium, Inc., the Kansas rural transit drug and alcohol testing administrator, provides some valuable guidance.

FTA regulations require a safety-sensitive employee to submit to a test when the employer has reasonable suspicion that the employee has used

a prohibited drug or has misused alcohol, as defined by the regulations. Requesting an employee to undergo a reasonable suspicion test must be based on “*specific, contemporaneous, articulable observations concerning the appearance, behavior, speech, or body odor of the safety-sensitive employee.*” In this context, contemporaneous means that a request for an employee undergo reasonable suspicion testing must occur close to the time the supervisor makes the observations delineated above.

If a supervisor (trained to identify the signs and symptoms of drug and alcohol use) reasonably concludes that objective facts may indicate drug use or alcohol misuse, this is sufficient justification for testing.

A supervisor who will be called upon to make a reasonable suspicion determination must be trained in the facts, circumstances, physical evidence, physical signs and symptoms, or patterns of performance and/or behavior that are associated with use, misuse, and abuse. Supervisors must be also trained in the proper procedures for confronting and referring the employee for testing.

This training includes at least 60 minutes covering the signs and symptoms of drug abuse, and an additional 60 minutes of training on signs and symptoms of alcohol misuse. One item that should be covered in super-

visor training is the documentation process for drug and alcohol testing. This documentation is important for a number of reasons.

Proper documentation:

- outlines a pattern of performance;
- assists in making a fair, impartial assessment;
- helps the employee recognize the problem;
- allows rapid action to be taken;
- protects the supervisor.

Guidelines for documentation include:

- maintain an employee working file;
- record all noteworthy incidents/behavior;
- be timely in documentation;
- be specific about types of incidents/occurrences, dates times, places and others involved;
- keep notes legible and chronologically organized;
- don’t record incidents occurring off the job;
- don’t record gossip or hearsay;
- maintain confidentiality.

Because “reasonable” is a subjective term, supervisors must properly document their suspicion. This protects both the supervisor and the agency in the case of litigation by a disgruntled employee. Objective facts substantiating a supervisor’s reasonable suspi-

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Tips for Writing a Driver Handbook

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 by Matthew Kaufman

Hiring, training, and retaining skilled vehicle operators is a common challenge for small transit system operators. Writing a driver's handbook will help you train your employees, and can result in greater retention of drivers who know what is expected of them and how to comply with those expectations.

A driver's handbook can help provide employees the training necessary to comply with federal and state regulations. It can also serve as a reference source when they have questions. Having a driver's handbook can also increase your agency's level of customer service, because your riders will receive a consistent level of service system-wide. You can help avoid those "But the other driver does it" situations.

Start by Doing Research

The first step to writing your handbook is determining what information needs to be included. Make sure your handbook is useful and does not simply add reading for your drivers.

To prepare your handbook you should take the following steps:

- ✓ Determine what federal and state regulations with which you are required to comply and the steps your drivers must take to comply with those regulations. Examples include ADA requirements, FTA and FHWA drug compliance, and nondiscrimination acts.
- ✓ Talk to your drivers and dispatchers about common problems or questions that occur during the course of their workdays. These issues should



After gathering material for your handbook, make sure it will be READ—by presenting the information with an easy-to-understand and engaging format.

be addressed in your handbook.

- ✓ Speak with your mechanics. They may be able to provide valuable information regarding how drivers should be reporting maintenance problems or using vehicles to reduce maintenance problems.
- ✓ Provide riders with surveys to determine what they consider good and poor customer service. Address these issues in your driver handbook.
- ✓ Contact other transit providers in your area. They may be able to tell you about issues they have addressed that should be covered in your handbook. These providers may also have their own driver's handbooks that could be resources for you.

Main Subjects to Include

You will have a good base of material for your handbook after doing the research above. The information should be organized into sections. These are some typical issues covered in transit driver handbooks:

- ✓ *Customer service issues*—such as the level of assistance drivers should provide to clients boarding or getting off the vehicle, fare procedures, pick-up and no-show policies, handling complaints, and policies about drinks and food on the vehicle.
- ✓ *Vehicle use information*—such as fueling procedures, parking, inspection, use of wheelchair lifts and motorized cart storage, what to do if a vehicle breaks down, and how and when to document vehicle maintenance.
- ✓ *Rules for drivers concerning interacting with the dispatcher so that drivers know when to call in updates regarding their location and passenger pickups.* Drivers also need to know what to do in the event of an accident, injury, or a passenger becoming suddenly ill. Also consider including information on the steps drivers should take in inclement weather.
- ✓ *Information on human resource policies.* This includes information on lunches and breaks, sick days, drug policies, dress, and personal belongings in the vehicle.

Sources for Regulatory Information

You may not have immediate answers for all of the issues raised—particularly in reference to drug poli-

cies and ADA issues. Much of the information you need can be obtained for free from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). It offers a guide for grantees of FTA Section 5307, 5309 and 5311 programs titled *How to Write an FTA Drug and Alcohol Policy*. Agencies covered by FHWA regulations should refer to the guide titled *Drug and Alcohol Testing for Human Services Transportation Providers*. For more information on CTAA, visit their web site at www.ctaa.org.

Information to assist you with ADA issues is available online, and books are available about the subject. If you are unable to find a book at your local bookstore, you may want to consider an online-book retailer that offers a larger selection of subject matter.

If you have questions regarding blood borne pathogens, CTAA offers *Minimizing the Risk from Blood Borne Pathogens: A Guide for Managers*. You may also want to refer to the state Commercial Driver Handbook for additional information.

Make it User-Friendly

Once you have all of your materials, be sure to present them in an easy to understand and engaging format. Remember to use major subject headings and provide a table of contents. This will help make your handbook a resource your drivers will turn to for quick answers to questions.

You may also want to use graphics such as tables, charts, and pictures. Graphics will make the handbook more engaging. If you do not have a digital camera or scanner for adding photographs, you can always have your film developed onto a CD or digitized at a copy center.

That said, don't overuse graphics. Use them when they fulfill a specific purpose.

You can help your drivers retain the information in the handbook by adding a few questions at the end of each section of the handbook. This will encourage readers to pay more attention and go back to subjects they may have glossed over. You can also consider adding a question section at the end of the handbook covering all information provided.

Your ultimate goal is to provide your drivers with a source of information that will give them more confidence in their jobs and improve the quality of your transit services.

Kansas RTAP has sample policies and procedures on its web site at www.ksrtap.kutv.ku.edu. Click on the "Technical Assistance" link.

Sources: *Complying with Federal Regulations: A Primer for Rural Transit Providers*, www.ctaa.com; *Driver and Dispatch Personnel Policies*, Reno County Public Transportation Department; *Driver Training for Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems in New York State*, New York State Department of Transportation. ▲

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problem, "I think everybody's just trying to do as much as they can with the funds they have. It's spread us a little thinner... somewhere along the line we're going to have to do something like switching to hybrid vehicles." She also mentioned the possibility of depending more on renewable resources to provide energy for facilities—resources like wind and solar energy, both of which Kansas has in abundance.

Sarah Krom said, "Other than a standardized government rate for

fuel, I'm not sure there is an answer."

Gary Rohr was more hopeful. He brought up the possibility of banding together to contract with gas companies or stations as statewide fuel providers, saying, "[OCCK is] spending roughly, say \$10,000 a month on fuel; you take that across Kansas and that's millions of dollars a year." That is the kind of contract that might well be attractive to a fuel provider.

Lisa Warner and others highlighted the importance of cooperation and coordination between providers.

Dee Hull, however, pointed out the downside of relying solely on coordination to address the problems posed by high fuel prices: "Sometimes it sounds good to coordinate, but... when you get it down on paper, it's not cost-efficient."

Many transit managers have ideas about what needs to be done, and many of these ideas sound good. But a comprehensive statewide dialogue is needed to flesh out these ideas into solutions. Dee Hull said, "We've kind of batted around what we can do, but we haven't really zeroed in on the gas thing because everybody's still wondering where it will land." The continued fluctuation of fuel prices makes it all the more vital that transit agencies work together on strategies to address the issue. Solutions such as collective fuel bargaining will work in the good times as well as the bad. As yet, there is no forum planned for providers, government agencies, and legislators to deal with the fuel problem collectively. Many would welcome this. And I'm sure we all could come up with the gas money to get there.

Sources: "CTAA Calls for Immediate Response to National Energy Crisis," www.ctaa.org;

"Going Forward: Mass Transit Popularity Surges in U.S.," by Lindsey Layton for the *Washington Post*, April 30, 2000. ▲

Reasonable suspicion,

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cion can be classified as either short-term or long-term indicators.

Short-term indicators include:

- poor physical coordination/slow reactions or slurred speech;
- the odor of marijuana/methamphetamine/crack cocaine smoke in the area;
- hand tremors or unsteady walking;
- dilated or constricted pupils;
- disorientation/unusual restlessness;
- combative behavior, loud arguing or fighting;
- the presence of drug paraphernalia and or observing the employee ingest, inject, smoke, or inhale (snort) a prohibited substance.

Long-term indicators include:

- work performance problems, including deterioration in quantity and/or quality of the employee's work;
- problems with attendance such as tardiness and increasing absenteeism;
- increased accidents and injuries;
- poor judgment and difficulty in concentration;

It is not the supervisor's job play the heavy or to make the employee understand all the ramifications of their actions.

- negligence in personal hygiene or pale or sickly complexion;
- social withdrawal, including isolation, overreaction to criticism, and lack of eye contact;
- emotional changes such as noticeable signs of anxiety or depression, paranoia, or excessive laughing.

Clinical diagnosis of an alcohol or drug problem is not the responsi-

Tips for "Being Reasonable"

To appropriately perform this function of their job, supervisors should:

- *Be attentive.* Be ready to recognize employee problems (e.g., accidents, frequent lateness, mood swings) that may or may not be related to alcohol or other drug abuse.
- *Observe.* Focus on specific aspects of job performance.
- *Document.* Keep an ongoing record of the employee's performance.
- *Focus on job performance.* Avoid judging, diagnosing, or counseling the employee.
- *Be thoughtful.* Stay nonjudgmental and recognize the employee's point of view.
- *Be straightforward.* Stick to the facts of job performance; don't get sidetracked.
- *Be consistent.* Follow the same procedures for all employees.
- *Maintain confidentiality.* Discuss employee problems in private and keep the discussion between the two of you.
- *Refer.* Encourage troubled employees to seek help from the resources available in the workplace or the employee assistance program.
- *Follow up.* Continue to assess employee job performance over a period of time.

bility of supervisors, but they are responsible for assessing and regulating work performance. When an employee's performance begins to deteriorate for whatever reason, the supervisor has the right and respon-

sibility to intervene. The supervisor needs not be an expert on alcohol and drugs to intervene appropriately if substance abuse is suspected; the intervention should be focused on the employee's performance problem.

Reasonable suspicion testing is not a full-scale addiction intervention. It is not the supervisor's job to make the employee understand all

the ramifications of their actions. It is not the supervisor's job to be the bad guy or to play the heavy. However, it is important to remember that drug and alcohol use in the workplace, especially by employees performing safety sensitive functions, such as driving a bus, has the potential to hurt not only the employee or the profit margin, but literally dozens of innocent people as well. It is the supervisor's job to ensure that their employees meet a standard of performance.

Drug and alcohol use in the workplace simply cannot stand, and it is the duty of every trained supervisor to do his or her best to comply with FTA regulations concerning drug testing. But remember, if you are suspicious of an employee, it is also your duty to be reasonable. ▲



Marketing Fixed-Route Service to Paratransit Customers

by Arin Gustafson

Does your paratransit agency serve individuals who are capable of using fixed route services for some or all of their transportation needs? If yes, this can be costly to your transit agency and can hinder the freedom of your riders. There are numerous ways to encourage the use of fixed route service by capable individuals, but before you promote fixed route service to them, you must understand the many reasons why they do not use this service. Some reasons are:

- Absence of curb cuts and having to cross wide or busy roads.
- Lack of large, covered shelters at bus stops.
- Security and safety concerns about getting to the bus stop, waiting at bus shelters, and riding the bus.
- Inadequate training of drivers. Drivers need to announce the bus stops clearly and well in advance.
- Requiring transfers. Many disabled individuals find it difficult to make transfers between vehicles. Variables that make transfers daunting include difficulties boarding and/or understanding the bus-time tables. Requiring transfers can discourage capable individuals from using accessible fixed route service.
- Lack of knowledge about accessible fixed-route services. This is a major reason why capable individuals do not use these services.

After addressing these needs and making some changes in coordination with your area's fixed route transit service, you may be able to make accessible fixed route services more attractive to your capable passengers.

Assess Paratransit Eligibility Applications

The first step in looking at this issue is to make sure that your agency accurately assesses each individual's complementary paratransit eligibility application in terms of functional ability. This will determine whether an individual is able to use fixed route service some of the time, part of the time, or none of the time. For example, an applicant who uses a wheelchair may be eligible for paratransit only when the fixed route transit is not accessible, and therefore he or she should be granted partial eligibility.

Applicants who are not eligible for complementary paratransit should be sent a "referral" to the fixed route program. A referral differs from a rejection letter because it alerts the individual to fixed route services that meet their needs. On the other hand, a rejection letter only tells the indi-



The first step in promoting fixed route service over paratransit is to make sure that your agency accurately assesses each individual's complementary paratransit eligibility application in terms of functional ability.

vidual that he or she is not eligible for complementary paratransit.

Medical Reviews

Do you have effective procedures for determining eligibility? MaryAnn Dendor, the ADA administrator of the Metro system in Houston, Texas, recommends conducting a small sample of medical reviews on new paratransit applicants who ordinarily would not undergo an in-person assessment.

For example, your agency could randomly select a percentage of new applicants during the months of March, April and May, and require them to get a medical opinion in addition to their paratransit applica-

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Road Rage Quiz

If your usual “smiley” face looks like this when you drive, you need to take this quiz.

by Ira Allen

Are you ready to rumble? Have you been accused of being a “RAGER” of the road kind? Have those drives into work or school become increasingly colorful in language—and have your gestures turned into the obscene kind? Then it may be time to test your Road Rage Quotient—that is, if you have the patience to sit for five minutes....

1. *If you are driving in traffic in the fast lane and the person in front of you is driving the speed limit, do you:*
 a—slow down;
 b—slow down, turn on your signals and move into the other lane, and eventually move back into the fast lane;
 c—tailgate the idiot;
 d—turn on your high beams and honk your horn and tailgate;
 e—zip into the slow lane; then zip into the fast lane while giving the finger and then slow down in front of the jerk.
2. *You are in a parking lot looking for a parking space. You spot an empty place, but there is a woman standing in the middle of the space obviously saving the space for her husband who is nowhere to be seen. Do you:*
 a—move on and look for another place;
 b—give her a dirty look and then move on;

- c—swear at her and yell: “Move it!”
- d—act like you are going to drive into her;
- e—drive into that spot, just missing her by an inch.

3. *You are stopped at a traffic light that has just turned green. The person in front of you is chatting on a cell phone.*

- Do you:
- a—wait calmly, realizing that it will only be a second or two;
 - b—wait a second, put on your signals and move into another lane;
 - c—honk your horn and yell out your window “Pay attention, Idiot!”;
 - d—zoom up quickly behind the person, honking madly;
 - e—zoom up behind, swerve beside the person, ranting and raving then in the middle of the intersection slow down in front of the person and then zoom off.

4. *A person is tailgating you. Do you:*

- a—as soon as it is safe, signal and pull into another lane;
- b—continue on because you are going the speed limit;
- c—stick your hand out the window and give them the finger;
- d—slow down even more and make it impossible for the idiot to get into another lane;
- e—slow down, then speed up, then slow down again and slam on the brakes.

5. *When you are in your car, how often are you ranting and raving?*

- a—almost never;

- b—occasionally;
- c—most of the time;
- d—99 percent of the time;
- e—100 percent of the time in the car and 50 percent of the time outside of the car once you’ve reached your destination.

6. *Which of the following groups of people do you find have poor driving skills?*

- a—I can’t really categorize them;
- b—people who drive for a living;
- c—people from other ethnicity than your own, women drivers, taxi drivers;
- d—other ethnicity, women, teenagers, older people, people with glasses, taxi drivers, blondes, people who are so short that they can’t be seen behind the wheel, minivan drivers, sports car drivers, truckers;
- e—all of the above plus brunettes, black haired people, bald people, red heads, punk-colored-hair people, members of the hair club.

7. *I find driving to be:*

- a—fun and relaxing;
- b—relaxing when I’m alone on the road, but nerve wracking in city traffic;
- c—challenging and dangerous;
- d—a good place where I can really let loose and express myself;
- e—a place where I show the rest of the world what a bunch of incompetents they are.

8. *My driving skills are:*

- a—good;
- b—great;

c—better than most on the road;
 d—superior;
 e—the best; no one comes close to my skill.

9. *You are driving down the road, going your usual speed, when you spot a woman putting on her makeup. Do you:*

a.—laugh and continue on your way;
 b—drive by and give her a dirty look;
 c—speed past her and yell “Forget it; it won’t help;”
 d—speed past give her the finger, yell obscenities;
 e—same as “d,” but also cut in front of her and slam on the brakes.

10. *Which phrase fits best how you feel about people?*

a—I like them;
 b—I like some of them;
 c—Most people suck;
 d—I like people when they are not around;
 e—I like people once they’re dead.

OK folks...it’s time to tally up those numbers. Give yourself the following points for each letter:

for every “a,” 0 points;
 for every “b,” 2 points;
 for every “c,” 3 points;
 for every “d,” 4 points;
 for every “e,” 5 points.

As you may have guessed, the higher your score, the more aggressive your driving is likely to be.

If your score is between 0 and 10, it’s wonderful to have you on the road; you are courteous and serene, a veritable saint in a motor vehicle.

Conversely, if you scored between 40 and 50, you’re a distinct menace to society, and in addition to selling your car and burning your driver’s license, you should seek professional help immediately.

If your score was somewhere in the middle, like many of us, you may want to read the article we published in the last issue of the *Kansas Trans*

Reporter (October 2001) about what you can do to minimize road rage.

Source: Adapted from “The Road Rage Quiz,” www.fredtma.org/The%20Road%20Rage%20Quiz.htm ▲

Marketing fixed route service, continued from page 9

tion. The medical assessment should focus on whether or not that individual is paratransit eligible, according to the doctor. If doctors are saying some of your passengers are capable of using fixed route service, but your agency is accepting them for your paratransit service, your agency needs to reassess its paratransit eligibility procedures. This process allows your agency to study whether medical reviews of paratransit applicants would have resulted in a different decision regarding complementary paratransit for the applicant.

Incentives and Travel Trainers

If some of your passengers are eligible for paratransit services but could still use fixed-route service some of the time, you can encourage them with incentives or special training. Houston and Chicago each implemented a successful program promoting fixed route service among their capable passengers.

In Houston, paratransit-eligible customers are entitled to ride free on regular metro buses, whereas they would have to pay for the complementary paratransit ride. Other transit agencies around the nation have similar programs that provide either reduced fare or no fare for paratransit eligible riders who use the fixed route service when accessible.

The Chicago area transit system

has offered travel training for several years to help persons with disabilities learn to use public bus and rail systems. They encourage their travel trainers to highlight the benefit of spontaneity—“you can go where you want, when you want.” A successful training program can improve the trainees’ quality of life, and that can ultimately lead to improved rider self-esteem.

No matter how your agency decides to promote fixed route service, it is important to market the change as an improvement rather than a penalty.

A publication that can help your transit agency promote fixed route service among capable passengers is the *Guidebook for Attracting Paratransit Patrons to Fixed-Route Services*. This book is available

Increasing mobility options can boost a rider’s self esteem.

through the web site www.national-academies.org/trb/bookstore/, for \$65. The Guidebook provides fixed-route transit systems step-by-step instructions on how to attract individuals with disabilities and other potential riders to fixed-route services. The book is based on research and discusses a wide variety of topics including locating transit stops close to passengers, training drivers to be sensitive to people with disabilities, and effective travel training programs.

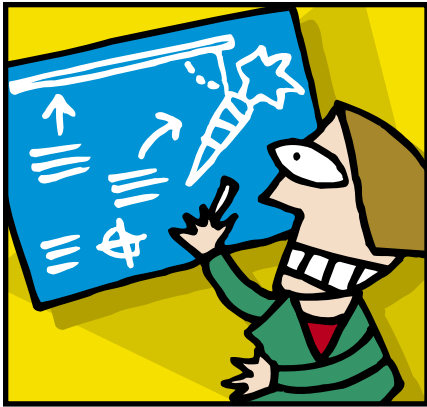
Sources: “Paratransit Operators Try Ways To Promote Fixed-Route Use,” *Transit Access Report*. May 2000.

“Chicago Region Transit System Hosts Travel Trainer Meetings,” *Transit Access Report*. May 2000.

Arizona Department of Transportation Freeway Management Systems web site at: www.azfms.com/DocReviews/Mar98/art16.html ▲

Do Safety Incentives Really Work?

by Carmen Deacher



Since the service pin was awarded, safety incentives and rewards have become part of our safety programs. Some incentive programs are simple, awarding pins and certificates; some more elaborate, involving bonuses, trips and other such items.

I get more and more questions about the effectiveness of incentive programs. This is due in part to the lack of desired results, competition among some employees and take-it-or-leave-it attitude.

So why have incentives? After all, isn't people's safety a basic part of the job?

To explore this, let's consider the appeal of incentive programs. For employees—pride and proof of accomplishment is important. That's

why pins, certificates, belt buckles and the like are always displayed. For employers—accident reduction, improved safety performance and reduced accident costs are the desired results.

The reason why most programs don't achieve desired results is because the expectations and the outcomes aren't linked. What you want and what you get may be different if there isn't a connected, focused approach to incentive/ reward programs.

Ask yourself this question: "What is the intent of an "incentive" program?" If your answer is "to reduce accidents," my question to you is: How do you *manage* accidents? Answer: You can't. Even more importantly, how do your employees reduce accidents? Did they intend to have them before?

An incentive program should have the principal objective of motivating individuals to behave consistently in such a way that accidents, which result from poor behavior, are eliminated. Motivation and behavior are the key words, and identifying inappropriate and poor behavior is the focus of foundation of desired improvements and incentives. Accidents and reductions of them are results of behavior, not manageable outcomes.

Rewards—as mentioned before—are accepted with pride by

those who receive them. Here's the other clue into the ineffectiveness of most incentive programs: The organization doesn't reward itself. There's no way of knowing if these programs benefit the bottom line, and it can't really link its benefits to those of individual employees.

So how do you develop or retool a safety incentive program? Here are some tips:

- Determine true costs of accidents and injuries (not just claims dollars).
- Determine root causes of accidents—all of them, not just those of driver or employee.
- Manage behavior. Are pre-trips being done correctly? Are people on time every day? Are the logs filled out completely and properly?
- Determine safety objectives and expected true costs savings to the organization if they're achieved.
- Determine the amount of the expected savings to be available for incentive programs. Note: Some of the expected savings should be kept for the organization as its reward.
- Establish group and individual behavior incentives. The organization (or group) must meet its objectives, then individuals who have met defined behavior standards get the reward.
- Communicate the program to everyone.

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The Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) operates two safety incentive programs: Annual Safe Driver and Distinguished Driver Award. Both awards reward individual drivers who do not have any chargeable accidents for the calendar year. KCATA also periodically runs monthly incentive programs that focus on team awards. The incentives—cash and days off—for the Distinguished Driver award increase for each continuous year that the driver meets the program's requirements. However, the Annual Safe Driver award remains constant; a pin is given each year that the driver qualifies for the award. Gloria Young, Manager of Safety and Instruction for KCATA, believes that "the most important aspect of developing a safety incentive program is to make it a labor-management effort," which includes the drivers in developing the program.



To Back Up, or to Back Up...



There's no question about it. Do it!

by Craig Damlo

Do you ever worry that your filing cabinet will get a cold and lose your payroll files? Unlike your filing cabinet, your computer can get a virus and lose valuable files. Are you worried that gravity will pull your cabinet doors down so that files can't be retrieved? That is just what can happen to the heads of your hard drive. Now, before you throw out your computer and switch back to paper record-keeping, you should know that the odds of losing computer files are small, and you can shrink those odds even more by backing-up your files.

What exactly is a back-up?

The classic definition is "a reserve or substitute." A more modern computer-related definition is "a copy of a program or file stored separately from the original." This definition should also say: "—and is updated regularly." Whether a file is backed up after every change, once a day, or once a month depends on the situation.

An ideal computer system would have just one central file server that contains all the data that needs to be backed up. This server would be connected to personal PCs that execute the software used to manipulate the files on the server. But most of us don't work that way—we each have a PC on our desk that stores software

applications and data used by those applications. Therefore, there are three important questions to ask when deciding to start an effective backup system:

- ✓ What files need to be backed-up?
- ✓ What media should I back-up onto?; and
- ✓ How often should I back-up?

All three questions have solutions that are difficult to put into general terms, but I will try to generalize for the most common system types.

What do you need to back up? Not the whole hard drive, not these

up easier is to place these files in a central folder from the start. You can always sub-divide this central folder into specific applications.

Now that you have decided what files to backup, the next question—what media?—is easier to handle. Look at the size of your files that need to be backed up; odds are good that they take up more space than a single diskette, but not enough to justify a large tape system. Other options are a zip disk system or a Compact Disk Recorder (CD-R) system. I prefer CD-Rs, because they are less vulnerable to being destroyed, and are relatively inexpensive.

You don't need to back up the whole hard drive.

days. This worked when hard drives were small, and backup media were larger than the hard drives. But today huge hard drives are affordable, which makes entire-disk imaging impractical. Besides, most of the drive is filled with program files that shouldn't be backed up, not only because it is a waste of space, but also because it may infringe on copyright protections.

So take a look at your hard drive and decide what needs to be backed up. Good candidates are payroll files, passenger databases, budget spread sheets, word processing documents and any other files you create using software. A great way to make back-

CD-Rs are also helpful for keeping a backlog of backups. Instead of over-writing your back-up media each week, you really should keep a minimum of a month of backups, or more, if the data you are saving is especially important. Ask yourself, "How much can I really afford to lose?" By placing files on CD-Rs you won't be able to overwrite what is already written, and can sometimes keep two or three back-ups on a single CD-R. This capability comes in very handy when you need to make backups from multiple machines.

The final aspect of backing up doesn't involve your data files at all.

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January 13-17, 2002
TRB 81st Annual Meeting
Washington, D.C.
Phone: 301-694-5243,
Fax: 301-694-5124
Web site: www.TRB.org

January 27-29, 2002
Southwest Transit Association
Annual Conference
Little Rock, AR
Contact: Carol Ketcherside
Phone: 210-967-6446
Fax: 210-967-6442
Email: cketcherside@stwa.org
Web site: www.swta.org

January 31, 2002
Substance Abuse Management
Seminar
Amarillo, TX
Contact: Jennifer Whalley
Phone: 617-494-3798

February 5, 2002
Substance Abuse Management
Seminar
Baton Rouge, LA
Contact: Jennifer Whalley
Phone: 617-494-3798

March 5-7, 2002
Management of Transit
Construction Projects
Lawrence, KS
Contact: Lynn Lawson, National

Transit Institute
Phone: 732-932-1707 x 20
Email:
contactus@nti.rutgers.edu

March 25-29, 2002
National Conference on Aging
and Mobility
Scottsdale, AZ
Contact: Brande Mead,
Maricopa Association of
Governments
Phone: 602-254-6300
Fax: 602-254-6490
Email:
bmead@mag.maricopa.gov
Web site:
www.mag.maricopa.gov

May 19-24, 2002
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Transportation EXPO '02
Austin, TX
Contact: Charlie Dickson,
Community Transportation
Association of America
Phone: (800) 527-8279
Fax: 202-737-9197
Email: dickson@ctaa.org
Web site: www.ctaa.org

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Safety incentives, from page 12

- Measure and communicate results throughout the incentive year.
- Incentive programs should reward the desired outcome, such as accident reduction.
- The greater the perceived benefit of incentive programs the more successful the program is.
- Benefits can include cash, lottery tickets, shares of company stock, trading stamps, patches, gift certificates, plaques, extra holidays and other privileges.
- Hold annual banquets to recognize the recipients of these awards.
- Press releases to local newspapers are a good way to recognize award recipients and gives your agency a positive image.
- Awards do not have to be large to be effective. Small awards can be handed out more frequently, they are probably less conducive to under reporting of accidents, and they act to reinforce pro-safety attitudes.
- The amount of the incentive

should continue to grow progressively as the individual driver accumulates a larger number of uninterrupted accident-free goals.

- Operational rules of the program should be kept simple so that everyone understands them.
- "Random" acts of kindness are always appreciated—thank you notes, snacks, remembering important days (birthday or service anniversaries).
- Include both group and individual performance rewards; and don't forget to reward the agency as a whole for meeting goals. What are the benefits of such a refocused program? The entire organization is involved in meeting safety objectives. Management is focused on behavior modification; employees are motivated to help each other and themselves achieve results, and everyone benefits if objectives are achieved.

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Backing-up computer files, from page 13

Instead it involves your power system. As we saw earlier this year in California, power isn't a completely predictable commodity.

Modern computer power back-up systems are battery stack systems. These are typically are only good for about three minutes of power to a computer and monitor. Three minutes may not seem like a great amount of time, but this is usually enough time to stop a loss of data during a brown out, and also enough time to save your data and shut the machine down during a black out. Many power back-up systems also come with options that allow you to hook the system to your computer and it will automatically shut your windows machine down if you are not around to shut it down yourself.

Back-up technology is prevalent and inexpensive, and the reason for backing-up files is clear. So there's no question about it... be sure to do it! ▲

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Managing System Safety for Rural Transit.

National Transit Resource Center Technical Assistance Brief No. 13. Revised 2001.

An Outline to Develop and Implement a Safety and Security Plan for Rural Transit Systems.

Written originally by Judith Byman, revised by the RTAP National Review Board, APWA staff and CTAA staff. 5 pages.

Getting Started—Creating a Vision & Strategy for Community Transit. National Transit Resource Center Technical Assistance Brief No. 21, December 2001. Describes a seven-part process for either starting a new transportation system or expanding and modifying existing transportation services. 7 pages.

Risk Management for Rural Transit Systems

(45 minutes), FTA/RTAP. Includes the risk management process, your risk profile, risk control, commercial insurance, risk financing alternatives, and how to make a risk management program succeed. For staff who have little experience with risk management.

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- Computer database searches
- Telephone consultation
- Referral services
- Training development
- Video lending library
- Program planning assistance

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