



Kansas Trans Reporter

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The Newsletter for Kansas Rural and Specialized Transportation Providers • The University of Kansas Transportation Center

Take a Number

Help is on its way for rural transit agencies meeting the challenge of intrastate and interstate motor carrier regulations.

by Pat Weaver

Compliance with motor carrier regulations, both interstate and intrastate, continues to be a challenge for Kansas rural transit providers. Complex regulatory language combined with definitions that don't quite match up with the reality of rural transit agencies make it a challenge to ensure an agency has complied with all the requirements. This article will bring you up-to-date on where you might be able to find help in the next few months.

USDOT 1671244

At minimum, some transit agencies need to obtain a U.S. DOT vehicle number, and perhaps a KCC number, and display the number(s) on the outside of the vehicle.

A little history

An article in the July 2002 issue of the *Kansas Trans Reporter* provided some guidance on this issue. Some of the steps required of rural transit agencies to comply with motor carrier regulations were outlined

Go to next page

Hanging Tough in Tough Times

by Ira Allen

Things look bleak for Kansas transit and other programs that depend on State funding to provide community services. Times are tough across the country, according to a November American Public Transportation Association (APTA) survey, but Kansas is particularly hard hit as State tax dollars are reallocated from transportation to fill other holes. Many agree that legislators are doing their best, but there simply isn't enough money to go around, and this is expected to cause severe budget shortfalls in the

Go to page 3

Inside:

Interstate transit, continued, Page 2



Hanging tough in tough times, continued, Page 3

New publications from the FTA Page 5



Put your mission to work Page 6

Making marketing accessible for visually impaired individuals Page 8



Can you relate? (to the public) Page 10



Orchestrate your preventative maintenance Page 11



Technology update Page 12



Calendar Page 14

Resources Page 15



Interstate transit,

continued from page 1

based on information available at the time. Since then, a number of meetings have been held at the state, regional, and federal level to try to help clear up some of the confusion and develop easier procedures for rural agencies to follow.

Who's involved?

Both the Kansas Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region VII office have taken the lead in assisting rural transit agencies with sorting out which agencies must comply and determining which provisions of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Act and associated regulations apply to rural agencies.

FTA Region VII recently hosted a meeting of State DOT representatives from Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa. FTA Regional Counsel Paula Schwach and Teri Graham, Division Administrator of the Kansas Office of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) presented information on transit agency compliance with interstate regulations. Schwach reported that some of the confusion that has existed results from definitions used in one federal agency's regulations that do not match those used by another. Two examples are the different uses of the words "private" and "for hire" by FMCSA and FTA.

Clarifying state requirements

In addition to this work within the federal agencies, John Jay Rosacker, Assistant Bureau Chief of the KDOT's Bureau of Transportation Planning, along with staff at KDOT's Office of Public Transportation have met with Kansas Corporation Commission (KCC) representatives to identify Kansas

motor carrier requirements that may apply to both intrastate and interstate passenger transportation operators based in Kansas. KCC is responsible for regulating motor carriers based in Kansas, with some exceptions. A bill introduced during the current Kansas Legislative session (H.B. 2244) would exempt organizations operating public transportation systems from KCC economic regulation, pursuant to federal law. These motor carriers, however, would continue to be subject to safety regulations.

Who must register?

As it turns out, nearly every agency, whether its vehicles travel across state lines or not, likely must comply with some parts of FMCSA regulations, KCC regulations, or both. At a minimum, non-governmental agencies providing passenger transportation need to obtain a U.S. DOT vehicle number, and perhaps a KCC number, and display the number(s) on the outside of the vehicle. In addition, certification of minimum liability insurance coverage may be needed, along with an accident registry. Agencies operating larger vehicles (16 passengers or more including a driver) need to comply with additional requirements such as CDL licensure and drug and alcohol testing of drivers, and various safety requirements.

Insurance considerations

Last year we reported that the regulations require minimum insurance limits of \$1.5 million for vehicles with 7-15 passenger capacity and \$5 million liability requirements for vehicles designed to transport 16 or more passengers, including the driver for vehicles transporting passengers across state lines. We've found in further investigation that, while the regulations contain these limits, the federal law provides an exception for FTA grantees, requiring liability only to the

highest liability limits required in any of the states in which the service is provided (49 USC 31138 (e)). For example, according to the FMCSA, a provider transporting passengers from Kansas and Oklahoma must have insurance limits at least equal to the state requiring the highest limit.

Part of the information developed at KDOT will be information on those limits in each state. Schwach reported that a proposal has been drafted to correct the FMCSA regulation on state insurance minimums to be consistent with the exemption in the statute for FTA grantees.

Getting help

KDOT's Office of Public Transportation is preparing materials which will outline compliance steps for rural agencies, based on the size of vehicles they operate and the type of service provided. The materials will include a step-by-step outline of the procedures, plus sample forms. KDOT and RTAP staff are meeting with the FMCSA Kansas Division staff to help identify any problem areas. A word of caution: if you have been advised that you need to comply with motor carrier requirements, do not hesitate to begin application.

What's next

A letter to all Section 5311 and 5310 agencies will be sent by the KDOT Office of Public Transportation within a few weeks to inform you of basic requirements. In addition, a request will be made to add this topic to agendas of Coordinated Transit District regular meetings to go over the handbook. Most immediate priority will given to those areas where most interstate transportation occurs.

Go to page 7

Tough times,

continued from page 1

coming year.

So what impacts are (and will) budget shortfalls have on transit in Kansas, and what measures are providers taking to cope with their suddenly thinner pocketbooks? What does the future look like, and how will Kansas transit survive it? We've asked representatives of several of the Coordinated Transit Districts (CTDs) to give us their impressions of transit and the economy in Kansas, and to share possible solutions.

Looking ahead

One future impact, said Connie Shellhammer of CTD 13 (counties in south-central Kansas), could come in the form of putting off new vehicle purchases.

"We've been able to get the vans over the last couple years, because we've had some carry-over money in the budget, and I don't think we're going to have that," she said.

Sarah Krom, of CTD 14 (counties in southwestern Kansas), agreed. "In our CTD we're probably looking at the inability of some agencies to replace vehicles as soon as they really should," she said.

Pansy Rudolph, from CTD 4 (some of the north-central counties), summed up prospects for the future succinctly: "You can't run if you don't have money to buy the gas or pay the personnel."

From CTD 8 (northwestern Kansas counties), Ron Straight was concerned with funding sources. "That's where we're hurting. What will affect transit is if the State legislature starts dipping into Department of Transportation funds," he said.

Facing struggles

At present, however, agencies are certainly surviving. Rudolph noted

We interviewed the following Kansas CTD chairpersons:

Connie Shellhammer, Harper County Department on Aging, CTD 13;
Pansy Rudolph, Marshall County Agency on Aging, CTD 4;
Sarah Krom, Sunflower Diversified Services, CTD 14;
Ron Straight, Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas, CTD 8

that her agency in Marshall County has not—as yet—been as hard hit as others. "We always operate like we're not going to have any money tomorrow, so it probably hasn't affected us as badly as it has some," she said.

Straight found fare increases within Hays and for out-of-town trips unavoidable, as was also the cutting of eight hours of services, a good part of which was "a little-ridership, high-mileage route."

In Harper County, reported Shellhammer, "We have increased our fares, but we try to keep them

cut services in Harper County.

In Great Bend and the surrounding area, Krom said that she has been able to hold fares steady so far, but also noted, "I've had to pull ...available seats during off-peak hours. Where I had 20 seats available before, I may have 10 or 12 now."

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "very little" and 5 being "very badly," all four ranked the economy's effects so far on their agencies a 3. All four also put a condition on that ranking: "so far." Krom elaborated, "I don't think it will take much more reduction in reimbursement and we'll be a five."

Living the solution

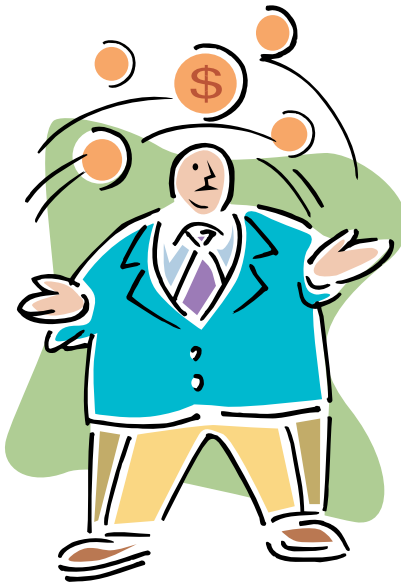
So what are these agencies doing to protect themselves?

Connie Shellhammer summed it up best, saying, "We just kind of go day by day. I try not to stress my staff about it and I try not to [stress myself]."

That is not to say Shellhammer is not taking measures to help her agency weather the current economic troubles. Like Rudolph and Krom (and nearly every other provider in Kansas and probably the country), she is looking for ways to reduce costs without cutting services.

One thing her agency has had to do this year is let its membership in the Chamber of Commerce lapse. "That's money in our budget we just can't afford to pay," she said. Shellhammer also said her agency would have to cut back somewhat on advertising in the media.

Go to next page



low enough that we don't lose customers." That's a struggle faced by all providers—finding a balance where fares are high enough to help the agency function, but low enough that potential riders don't avoid transit. And it is a particularly relevant struggle in the tough economic times we're facing right now. By increasing fares Shellhammer has not had to

Tough times, continued from page 3

"I don't know if we have any real innovative [solutions]," she said. "More or less if it's something we need to buy and we can put it off for a while, we do. [It's about] pinching pennies where we can."

Straight feels the solution lies in getting the support of local communities.

Shellhammer is also trying to group riders for out-of-town trips, but that isn't always feasible.

Many of the providers in Sarah Krom's CTD run smaller, "the-bus-is-in-the-barn" type operations, but some of their larger providers have had to revise budgets. One cut Krom's agency has made is to overtime. She said, "I used to have the budget authority to offer drivers overtime, and I am now on a no-overtime restriction."

One problem Krom noted with targeting personnel costs is that when taken to its logical extreme (replacing full-time positions with part-time ones), it makes the positions harder to fill, and in some instances the quality of service provided suffers significantly. "That could be a disaster for some systems," Krom said.

Another cost-cutting strategy Krom uses: "I analyze routes and whenever possible send the most fuel-efficient vehicles."

For Pansy Rudolph, the way is clear. Not easy, certainly, but clear: "Be conservative, cooperate and coordinate as much as we can. Make the dollar stretch as far as we can, and we'll be able to carry on." Although her transit agency has yet to make adjustments because of the economy,

several others in her CTD have. "The sheltered workshops in Washington and Marshall Counties have had to cut routes, in terms of driving people to work," Rudolph explained.

Two other participants at her last CTD meeting were reorganizing in an effort to meet consumer needs while facing fiscal reality. As far as

full-scale solutions go, she was not optimistic. "At this point in time, I've not heard of anybody that's got any really good solutions to any of it," she said.

Ron Straight said, "I was told I had to lay off somebody, but I could not discontinue service... We're still continuing business, but I think if things keep going the way they

Straight is not alone in the quest for new sources of funding. Shellhammer is also "seeking grants where available," and Rudolph's agency has benefited greatly from "individuals giving match money for KDOT vehicles... I can't thank them enough," she says.

Keep on going

Despite worries about what the future might hold, all four were firm in their commitment to transit. Shellhammer summed the situation up: "The need is still there, so it's service as usual." All four were also reluctant to raise fares. "I can see our fares increasing," said Krom, "[but] the majority of our folks are on Social Security, and they can't work overtime to meet those fare increases."

Rudolph agreed: "We have not done a fare increase because, seriously, how much can the elderly actually shoulder?" Shellhammer's final comment on the matter was pragmatic:



Holding ground in tough times, as these clearly are, takes coordinating and cooperating with other agencies. It takes not getting lost in smoldering resentments over turf struggles. And it takes an attitude of perseverance.

are, we might have to add layoffs by July."

Straight feels the solution lies in getting the support of local communities. "Good, dependable transit has a positive effect on your local economy,...and we are trying to communicate these benefits to our community," he said. These efforts can help improve local financial support.

"You can only raise your price so much. If you get it unreasonably high, nobody's going to ride, and you defeat your purpose." So the question remains, how to provide service as usual without creating a burden on the riders.

Coordination is the key word to emerge from all of these interviews. Coordination with other agencies is

Good Reading from the FTA

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by Matthew Kaufman
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vital in tough times, “to eliminate needless trips,” as Pansy Rudolph noted, and coordinating with the riding public is also important.

In Harper County, Shellhammer’s agency coordinates with Anthony City Taxi, and most of her riders have been “really good about [fare increases], very understanding.” But Sarah Krom lamented, “One of the problems with rural transit is that folks are involved with so many other issues [besides providing transit services]. All these programs are getting hit. There’s nowhere else to go to grab dollars to support programs. Some of us are getting triple-quadruple smacked around here.”

Krom also said, however, that although she didn’t have a prediction for the future, she would “like to see that at a minimum we hold ground where we’re at.”

Holding ground in tough times, as these clearly are, takes coordinating and cooperating with other agencies. It takes not getting lost in smoldering resentments over turf struggles. And it takes an attitude of perseverance, as all four of our respondents display. Contacting other providers is the first step to coordinating with them, and sharing ideas is the beginning of the process that leads to coordinating services. One forum for sharing ideas and contacting other providers is the Kansas RTAP discussion group (sign up online at www.kutc.ku.edu/rtap/listserv.html).

The perseverance you’ll have to come up with on your own.

Source: “Transit Providers Confront Ill Effects of Economy” from *Transfer* (an electronic update of the Surface Transportation Policy Project), January 6, 2002, Volume 9, Issue 1. www.transact.org/transfer/trans03/01_06.asp ▲

Last year the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) issued three publications to assist transit agencies with drug and alcohol testing. While KDOT coordinates the Drug and Alcohol Program for all transit agencies in the state, it is still important that each agency understand its own responsibilities. These publications can help your agency understand and comply with drug and alcohol testing requirements and explain the reasoning behind the requirements.

The first of a two part series, *Implementation Guidelines for Drug and Alcohol Regulations in Mass Transit*, provides a complete background on drug testing requirements. It outlines steps agencies must take to create and maintain testing programs that comply with federal regulations revised in 2001.

The publication contains all of the guidance the FTA has issued over the past several years, and includes topics such as technical assistance, letters of interpretation, audit findings, newsletters, training classes, and public engagements.

While a bit of a tome, it is well

organized and offers recommendations for dealing with vague areas of the regulations.

A “Dear Colleague” letter is cited to help you deal with the regulations’ failure to address prescription drug use. The letter educates drivers about the risks of taking prescription drugs that can make them drowsy or impair their cognitive or mental abilities. Drivers should be encouraged to talk to their doctors and pharmacists about alternatives to their medicines that will not jeopardize safe job performance.

To answer questions about drug-testing requirements, the publication provides information on pre-employment, reasonable suspicion, post-accident, random, return-to-duty, and follow-up testing. It also gives detailed information on drug and alcohol testing procedures.

Information on consortia and the hiring of third parties to administer drug testing, alcohol testing, and program administration is covered. This is particularly useful to Kansas transit agencies because testing in our state is handled by a contracted consortium.

Second in the series is the FTA’s *Best Practices Manual: FTA Drug and Alcohol Testing Program*. This manual is the result of five years of FTA-sponsored audits of existing drug and alcohol testing programs. It assist transit providers in making decisions when regulations present multiple options, and helps transit providers decide when to exceed minimum FTA requirements.

The manual assumes readers understand the regulatory requirements presented in *Implementation Guidelines for Drug and Alcohol*

Go to page 7



Put Your Mission to Work

by Ira Allen



A mission statement has tremendous potential for guiding the growth of an agency. It can also be easily shoved in a drawer and forgotten, or simply lost in the shuffle of documents that cross the average transit agency manager's desk. If you don't want to waste the effort you put into creating or revamping this valuable document—especially if you read the companion piece in our last issue on creating a mission statement—you will need to take action.

Transit consultant Dave Cyra said, "The important thing for everyone—employees as well as passengers—is to *get the word*." When asked to expand on this, Cyra noted, "A mission statement is really a statement of accountability."

The big picture

So a mission statement tells you what you are aiming for, in a broad sense. Because of that, it should be used for goal-setting, and to help define expectations for and evaluations of

performance. Say, for instance, your mission statement is to be the most reliable transit system in a given area. If your on-time percentage is only 37 percent, your system's performance is probably not consistent with the mission statement. Used this way, the statement can help guide your agency's decision-making and evaluation processes.

This brings up the concept of organizational culture, a topic Cyra warmed to. How you use your mission statement "depends on the values of an organization, and it depends on the director." The problem, he said, comes when your mission conflicts with actual practice. "Do you change the mission statement or do you change operating procedures?" Sometimes you have to compromise operating procedures. For instance, Cyra explained, an agency whose mission is to provide top-rate customer service will have to compromise something in the way of volume of customers served.

The degree to which you are willing to compromise will depend on how closely your mission mirrors your organizational culture. (Coming up next issue: an article on organizational culture!) The more closely your mission fits with your culture, and the more your culture is shaped by your mission (it's a two-way street), the fewer conflicts between mission and procedures you should see. An abundance of conflicts might mean you still haven't worked out all the kinks in your mission statement itself.

Put it into practice

Noel said, "I think the greatest opportunity [to use the mission statement] that people miss is in disciplining employees. Why," he asked, "do we discipline, other than because people are fundamentally not embracing the mission statement?"

While not a ruler with which to rap employees' knuckles, the mission statement is essential when disciplining or going through the process of deciding to discipline an employee. People need to know why they are being disciplined or they will be much more resistant to changing their behavior, and they need to know, said Noel, that discipline is not random or arbitrary. It is a necessary result when members of the organization stray from the core values of the mission statement (and

If you put your mission statement on your wall, don't let it become just wallpaper.

you might even want to have a separate core values statement, but that's another article altogether).

Get the word and get it out

But how do you get the word out? Cyra suggests a few possibilities: "Hang it in the halls, hang it in the offices, put it on the back of business cards—that's one I see more often now." This last possibility is also good because if your statement won't fit on the back of a business card, it very well could be too long (in which

case, you might want to look at last issue's article on creating/revamping your mission statement).

Another option is to incorporate it into your office rhetoric. For example, if your mission statement says coordination with other agencies is important, when you are discussing ideas for new services, you definitely need to be talking about how you might be able to coordinate these services.

Michael Noel, of transit consulting firm Lazaro & Noel, said an agency's mission statement "should be your compass, your true North—when all else fails, this is what you do." The mission statement, he asserted, "is not just something that goes on the letterhead—although it should go on the letterhead. It should go on the bottoms of memos, on the walls, and in the buses. But it's what you do with it afterwards that really counts."

Noel told an anecdote of going into a place where the mission statement was literally painted on the wall, from one end to the other. It was huge. It was imposing. He said, "I walked around the room and asked people about their mission statement. Two thirds of them didn't know what it was, because paint on the wall was all it was to them. It was wallpaper."

In Noel's example, there was clearly no real effort put into incorporating the statement into day-to-day business. And that is the guiding lesson from all of this: Make your statement a part of how and why you do business. It's not enough merely to state your mission, or paint it on the wall, and leave it at that. To be truly worthwhile, a mission statement needs to actively influence the way your agency makes decisions. As Cyra and Noel suggested, this can range from influence on goal-setting to disciplinary issues, but it must be

done. So ask yourself: "How did I use our mission statement today?"

Source: "Three Keys to Making a Statement that Works," by Peter K. Gerlach, MSW, <http://sfhelp.org/06/mission2.htm>. ▲

From the FTA, continued from page 5

Regulations in Mass Transit, and builds on the regulatory requirements presented in that publication.

Examples of what other agencies are doing to comply with regulations are this manual's strength. While the first publication in the series explains what is required, this one provides examples of what a compliant program looks like.

Learn what other agencies are doing to comply with testing regulations.

The manual has examples of flowcharts used by other agencies to decide when to test employees for alcohol and drug use, along with actions for dealing with a worker's refusal to be tested.

The final report on drug and alcohol regulations from 2002 is *FTA Drug and Alcohol Assessment*. This report can serve as a resource to help you handle employee complaints and concerns regarding drug and alcohol testing. It presents results from an evaluation of the Drug and Alcohol Compliance Program.

The assessment reports the costs of complying with the FTA program compared to the costs of drug and

alcohol abuse to the transit industry. Costs supplied by KDOT for rural transit agencies are used to estimate testing costs for all transit agencies across the United States. The article provides a clear explanation of why the Drug and Alcohol Compliance Program exists, discussing deterrent effects and safety benefits.

A great deal more information is provided in these articles than is covered here. To view the articles in their entirety go to www.transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/Publications/Default.asp. If you do not have Internet access, fax a request for the publication(s) you would like to Alison Thompson at the Volpe Center at (617) 494-2684. ▲

Interstate travel, continued from page 2

According to Schwach and Graham, efforts are expected continue at the federal level to simplify FMCSA's complex regulatory language. The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and others have advocated developing more user-friendly guidance for smaller FTA grantees and for law enforcement officials that enforce FMCSA regulations. And, as mentioned earlier, resolution is expected on the discrepancy between regulation and statute on minimum insurance requirements for FTA grantees.

More information

Please contact your program coordinator at the KDOT Office of Public Transportation if you have an immediate question regarding compliance with the motor carrier regulations.

Also, watch your CTD meeting agenda and be sure to attend the meeting to learn more about the requirements that apply to your agency. ▲



Accessible Marketing

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by Matthew Kaufman
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When serving elderly persons with disabilities it can be easy to overlook some of their special needs. Tight schedules and limited budgets can leave your transit agency feeling like it lacks the time or the money to produce information sheets, brochures, and schedules in formats that can be understood by passengers with visual impairments. With little time or expense, however, your agency can produce materials that are accessible to your passengers with visual impairments.

The Americans with Disabilities Act required agencies, including transit providers, to provide service which meets the needs of individuals with visual impairments, and rightly so. Recent data show that one-in-six individuals age 65 and older is blind or severely visually impaired. It makes sense to produce materials that allow these individuals to use agency services. Passengers must be able to access information that explains how and when services function. Creating accessible documents is relatively easy, allows customers greater self-sufficiency, and improves customer service.

Selecting a format

Accessible documents can be created in several different formats. Large print is probably the easiest and cheapest of them. However, this format will not work for all individuals. Braille, audio tapes, and electronic

formats should also be considered. This article will discuss the first three formats, while an article in our next issue will discuss electronic options.

Determining the best format to use at your agency requires some thought and research. The first step involves interviewing riders about their needs. This will help you estimate how many riders with visual impairments you have and what formats are best. Your drivers, dispatchers, or individuals assigned to enrolling new riders can perform the interviews. Also consider conducting a phone survey. Avoid a survey by mail, as riders most in need may be unable to read or respond to it.

The next steps involve determining what types of documents you need to produce, how often they will be read, and whether riders will need to respond to information within the documents. Certain formats, as you will learn, are not portable, will be difficult to use if responses are necessary, or may be large and cumbersome if they contain a lot of information.

Large-print documents. Large print may be ideal if your riders with visual impairments have limited vision rather than blindness. Producing large-print documents can be as easy as reformatting your existing brochures and forms.

Large-print documents should be in 18-point, bold type; on non-glossy, off-white paper; and printed in a plain (sans serif) font. Paragraphs should be left justified and in the block style. The first line of block-style paragraphs is not indented, and each paragraph is sep-

arated by a blank space created by hitting the enter key twice. Line spacing should be set to 1.5 and automatic hyphenation of words should be turned off.

Existing documents should never be enlarged on a copier. Documents should be reformatted and printed to ensure proper spacing, fonts, size, and print quality.

Make sure that bound large-print documents look professional and the binding does not prevent pages from being flattened; some readers may use a magnifying glass to read them.

Large-print documents can be read anywhere, are easily transported, can quickly be referred to, and allow for responses to be noted on the document.

For every page of converted 11-to-12 point print you will have three pages of large print. Very large documents may become bulky if reproduced in this format.

Braille. Large-print documents will not help passengers who are blind. For these individuals consider the use of Braille, a system of raised dots that represent print letters. Producing documents in this format requires Braille translation software and embossing machines. Translator software converts text documents to Braille and embossers print the raised dots onto specialized paper.

Producing Braille documents can be expensive if you purchase the equipment yourself. Complex documents should also be proofread for accuracy and to ensure that special contractions, specific to Braille, are used correctly. To avoid these difficulties, you can contract with a Braille printer. These companies can take your original documents, convert them, and print them. It is most cost effective to submit the documents in electronic format. Prices

will differ significantly depending on the length and complexity of your document. The American Council for the Blind has a list of Braille contractors on its website at www.acb.org/resources, or you can call them at (800) 424-8666.

When printing Braille documents you should consider having them double-sided to cut down on paper use and to make them less bulky. This will require the use of special paper and embossing machines that may not be available through all Braille contractors.

As with large print, it is important that pages lay flat.

To assure that your sighted employees are able to distribute the documents, make sure the cover is labeled in printed text along with Braille.

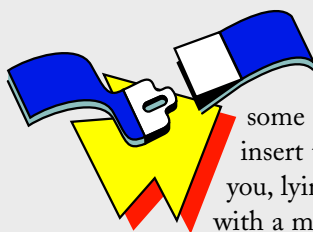
Before investing in creating Braille documents, make sure you have passengers who will be able to use them. Many people who are blind cannot read Braille.

Audio-recorded documents. Visually-impaired individuals and passengers who are blind and unable to read Braille may find recorded information useful. This simple and affordable method can accommodate the needs of many passengers.

Producing recorded information is relatively easy. The first step is to find a reader. This person should have a pleasing and clear voice, speak with an even pace, and without distracting, dramatic overtones.

Cassette tapes or compact discs (CDs) will work well for recording almost all the information you provide to passengers. CDs are cheaper than cassettes and you can probably produce them more quickly. You may find it easier to record with tapes if you are not comfortable using current technology. Of course, your riders will appreciate being able to

Describing Pictures Takes Some Care



This image is simple, but describing it to a person with a visual impairment requires some care. Do not say, “To buckle your seat belt, insert the fitting.” Instead say, “On either side of you, lying on the seat, you will find two fabric straps with a metal fitting at each end. One metal part is irregular in shape and has a hole toward one end. The other metal part is a square buckle. Insert the irregular metal part into the square metal buckle until you hear a click.”

choose from either format. A quick survey will tell you if they have a preference for CDs or cassettes.

An expensive recording machine is not necessary; however, strongly consider using one with an external microphone to achieve the clearest sound. If you are recording onto a CD you may use a CD burner that is connected to a stereo, or you may, if you have a CD burner on your computer, record the information directly onto your computer and then copy the recording onto CDs. Many websites or the user manual included with your computer can assist you with this process.

If you use cassettes be sure to start your recording by stating the side of the cassette. If multiple tapes or CDs are required be sure to state the cassette or CD number at the beginning of each recording.

Cassettes and CDs need to be labeled. When creating labels follow the rules provided for creating large-print documents. Braille labels should be placed on cassettes and CD cases given to blind passengers, who read Braille. Do not place Braille labels directly on CDs, as the labels may prevent the CDs from playing.

Recorded formats can be used and listened to repeatedly by almost all of your passengers. However, the

format is not portable if passengers lack portable playing devices and may not work well when listeners need to respond to specific questions that your agency is gathering.

What about pictures?

Special attention is required when reproducing pictures and diagrams. Regardless of the accessible format you use, clearly describe the information contained in images. If you are describing how to operate a door, explain where specific objects are located, describe their shape, and clearly explain how they are operated. Similar detail should be used with all descriptions. See example above.

Provide more than one format

When selecting and providing formats be sure to offer multiple options. Large-print documents are cheap and easy to print, but will not meet the needs of passengers who are blind or passengers with very limited sight. Providing passengers with multiple options will ensure that they understand their rights and responsibilities while easing the number of questions you and your staff must respond to.

Once you have created your accessible documents make sure they

Go to page 14

Can You Relate?

A brief guide to public (not necessarily media) relations

By Ira Allen

Many articles have been written about public relations. Most of them are filled with vital tidbits of information and ideas for working with the media or improving customer service. One such article, “Public Relations Key to Rural Transit Marketing Success,” was in the April 2001 issue of this publication. Although every transit manager should have these ideas at his or her fingertips, we see no need to add to their number. Instead, our time—and yours—might be better spent concentrating on the sometimes forgotten half of public relations: relating with the community. What does this mean for the average transit agency?

CTAA’s *Handbook for Effective Advertising and Marketing of Community Transit* describes two key elements of community relations: 1) participation in community events, and 2) establishing and fostering relationships with local organizations, community and business leaders. Throughout this article we will explore what community relations means for transit here in Kansas, and see how accurately the *Handbook* reflects Kansas trends.

Get out into the community

Community relations is all about “having a good working relationship in the community, being flexible, and being an innovative thinker—seeing beyond what’s already going on,” claimed Connie Shellhammer, of the Harper County Department on

Aging. She emphasized the importance of partnering with other groups and organizations within the community. For example, when requested, she happily goes out to speak to the Kiwanis or Lions Clubs, sororities, or whomever else is interested. She said, “I also try to do a weekly



news column [for the local newspaper], if I have time to get it written.”

Most rural transit agency managers are very familiar with the difficulty of finding time for those “extra” things amid the day-to-day bustle of running the agency, but it is vital to make that time, if possible.

Local radio stations may provide community relations opportunities for transit agencies as well. Perhaps your local radio station has a call-in program or one which features interviews with local agency representatives. If so, get on their program schedule. It’s a good opportunity to inform people of the agency’s purpose and importance, introduce new services or describe future plans. Be careful, however. Some radio shows are set up to promote controversy. It could actually damage to your agency to appear on one of these.

Another community relations approach is through action rather than talk. Shellhammer said, “In the summer we have given kids rides to the swimming pool, and we’ve been involved with a balloon-fest we have in the spring.” Shellhammer focuses some of her community relations efforts on intergenerational activities such as these, which helps the entire community to understand and appreciate the services her Harper County Department on Aging provides.

So effective community relations may require a willingness to go beyond the basics of the service your agency provides and explore some new territory. The public may or may not thank you for it, but they will almost certainly know you better—and will probably more fully appreciate your agency’s value to your community.

Two ways to get out there

The *Handbook* suggests a twofold role for transit agencies in community relations. The first role involves individuals from your agency, where “the system manager, for example, volunteers to participate in [city or county] planning, serve on a committee, or raise money.” The second role involves your services, such as “preparing a float for the parade or organizing special services.” Providing shuttle services in an emergency or transporting small groups to a community event would be examples of this.

According to Shellhammer, transit can indeed fill both these roles. As for the first role, she said, “It’s usually me...I’m on the Chamber of

Go to page 14

Orchestrate Your Preventative Maintenance

By Halsey King



Managing a bus fleet is similar to conducting an orchestra. You need a trained staff with all the instruments and tools to make the harmony come out right. This short article contains a plan that will help you become a good conductor. In our business, we call that plan the written Preventative Maintenance or P.M. Program.

A key component of the P.M. Program is the inspection function, as carried out by the drivers and maintenance technicians. Strong inspections by trained staff are a vital support mechanism for P.M. functions, component life cycles, fleet safety and cost control.

In working with fleets around the world, I have noted that where defects are reported and repaired promptly, total fleet condition is enhanced and maintenance costs are reduced. Anything less than these basics strikes a sour note and can, in the long term, lead to catastrophic maintenance failures.

In many maintenance settings the drivers and maintenance techni-

The 12 Module Bus Inspection Technique can:

- Identify all systems and components to be inspected, from FMVSS 208 seat belts to AS1 windshield glass.
- Establish a system for all drivers and technicians to use. Now everyone inspects a bus the same way.
- Reduce driver complaints and write-ups. Indeed, prompt repair ensures better maintenance timing, and satisfied drivers.
- Reduce long-term fleet maintenance costs. This makes your fleet more affordable.
- Ensure a uniform quality of inspection. All drivers use Section 1 to 9, all technicians use Section 1 to 12. Now two sets of eyes are looking for defects.
- Be used on any bus. In fact, it works on most vehicles made for passenger transportation.

cians take different paths to performing the actual inspection of a bus. Drivers whose visual inspection follows the daily bus report (DBR) form, may go into and out of a bus several times as they check lights, seats, wipers, bells and whistles. The same is true with the maintenance techs and they use an entirely different form (such as an in-house A-B-C inspection card) as they proceed along their inspection path.

This is the norm in most bus fleets. But in the late 80's one of my many highway patrol client agencies observed that it might be better if the inspection process for bus drivers and maintenance technicians followed the same general path as truck fleets, known as the North American Truck Inspection Format. That's a format which takes the driver around the truck in a very logical and systematic way.

Deciding to create such a format for buses, we knew up front that any format used would be generic. It would not look exactly like the truck inspection process, and we would

have to build in a lot of flexibility. After all, buses come with rear and front engine configurations. Seats, doors and the wheel chair lift could be placed almost anywhere between the front and rear bumpers.

Increasingly, our idea seemed to have merit among many agencies, private organizations and peer groups. We named it the "12 Module Bus Inspection Format." Training was then provided to motor carrier inspectors (highway patrol officers) and school bus maintenance technicians in a number of states over a two-year period.

Later, we took the program to another level. With the passing of additional ADA legislation in 1990, we made room to incorporate further federal and state requirements. Now a paratransit and small bus fleet could use the process from any state, and implement the new "12 Module Bus Inspection Technique" anywhere, just like the North American Truck Inspection Program.

But soon we uncovered a need

Go to page 13



Technology Update

by Matthew Kaufman

Technology is constantly improving to make business simpler and safer for transit agencies. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to sort through all of the new products and decide which might be useful to your agency. Below are three technologies that can reduce your maintenance costs and improve safety.

Finding pesky leaks

If the mechanics in your agency are spending a lot of time trying to locate fluid leaks, a leak detection kit is worth buying. They are easy to use and require no special training.

Your mechanics can use one of these kits by injecting a small amount of dye into the system that is leaking. Once injected, the dye mixes with the appropriate fluid—oil, coolant, or refrigerant. When the fluid leaks so does the dye. A UV light is then used to locate the source of the leak. When the UV light hits the leak, the dye glows.

The dye will not harm your engine or accessories and can remain in place to help your mechanics find future leaks.

Automakers in the United States, Japan, Europe, and Korea are all installing dye products at the factory. The Tennessee Department of Transportation reported it was able to locate leaks that eluded their mechanics for over a year in just 30 minutes after using a leak detection kit.

Avoiding accidents

Government statistics indicate that commercial vehicles are involved in

more than 1000 backing accidents every day, and 60 percent of those accidents occur because the driver did not see the object or pedestrian. Systems are available that automatically monitor the sides and rear of your vehicle and alert drivers to potential hazards, and they are becoming more affordable.

Small units that use ultrasonic technology can now be placed on vehicles to monitor blind spots for potential hazards. The units can often be installed by your own mechanics and have both visible and audible warnings.

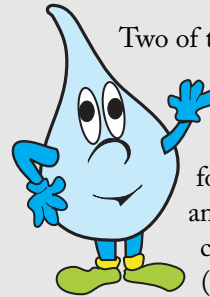
Rear-zone object detection systems automatically monitor for potential hazards when vehicles are placed in reverse and sound different warnings depending on how close the vehicle is to a potential hazard.

Vehicles equipped with side-detection systems monitor blind spots while the vehicle is in motion. An alarm will sound if the vehicle's blind spot is occupied when the turn signal is activated.

A U.S. DOT study estimates that rear-zone object detection systems can reduce parallel path, curved path, and pedestrian type accidents by almost 70 percent. Preventing accidents will lower your insurance premiums and reduce vehicle downtime.

S&S Distributing sells a Guardian Alert Backup Warning System. Models appropriate for transit vehicles start at \$452, and volume discounts are available. Their sensor system is easily installed and can be

Finding a Leak Detection Kit



Two of the top selling leak detection kits in Kansas City are manufactured by Yokogawa, sold for about \$270, and Inficom for \$365. For more information and additional manufacturers contact United Refrigeration at (913) 722-6300.

moved to other vehicles. For more information call (800) 998-0555 or visit <http://guardianalert.com>.

Seeing the light

Light-emitting diodes (LEDs) have been in use for years on indoor message boards and in various electronics, and recently they have begun appearing on the backs of cars and busses. The reason for the conversion is simple: LEDs have a significantly longer life than incandescent bulbs. The typical LED light is rated at 100,000 hours; so it may never need to be replaced. This can result in substantial savings to your agency.

While your vehicles probably did not come from the factory with LED lights, when your existing incandescent bulbs burn out you can replace them with LEDs. No conversions are necessary. New LEDs are available as drop-in replacements for license plate, tail, brake, reverse, and turn-signal lights. Even interior lights can be replaced with LEDs.

In addition to longer life, LEDs use less power, resulting in a decreased load on the alternator. Lower power usage also means a vehicle with mechanical problems

can run its lights longer while the engine is not running.

Semiconductor construction allows LEDs to light up faster than incandescent bulbs. LEDs can help prevent rear-end collisions when used as brake lights because of the extra warning time they provide motorists behind your bus.

If you decide to make the change, be sure to purchase US DOT approved lights. This will ensure the lights meet appropriate brightness standards. Because LEDs are becoming more prevalent, your current parts supplier probably carries them. If it doesn't, a quick Internet search will provide you with a list of options.

Sources: Tracerline Products, *Tracerline.com*; Ultra-Violet Products, *www.uvp.com*; Echovision Systems, *www.echovision.com*. ▲

Bus inspection,

continued from page 11

to further train drivers and technicians in inspection compliance. For example, we learned that most maintenance techs did not know why a person cannot stand forward of the white line on the bus floor. Also, we discovered that while most drivers and technicians had heard of the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS), not one knew where to access that information or which one of the 53 FMVSSs applied to the small and large buses they were already inspecting.

This is a flexible process, a plan. It takes the inspector over, under, around and through a bus in a logical and systematic way. Because it is generic, each fleet manager needs to plug in their own state's vehicle regulations, such as California's Title 13

requirements, as well as their bus manufacturer's inspection criteria.

The 12 modules look something like this:

✓ For drivers and technicians:

Module 1. At the driver's area:

- Check driver's seat cushion, adjustment, bolts, and seat belt.
- Check instrument panel, gauges, lights, switches.
- Look for and document missing parts, loose components.

Module 2. In the vestibule area:

- Windshield cracks, defrost air, fan speeds, noise.
- Visors, doghouse deal, bolts.

Module 3. In the stepwell:

- Stepwell. Lights, grab rails, glass seals, over center bar, air operation, loose screws, and floor trim.

Module 4. Inside the bus:

- Interior lights, floor, seats, belts, open emergency exits, check seals, hardware, WCL tie downs, destination signs and ADA equipment.

Module 5. Front of the bus:

- Check mirrors, wiper speeds, washers, glass (and DOT markings), lights, clearance lights, 4-ways and turn lights. Also, leaks under bus.

Module 6. Driver's side of the bus:

- Check front tire tread, inflation, wheel lugs, side panels, mud flaps, all glass, side turn indicators, rear tires.

Module 7. At the rear of the bus:

- Inspect all lights and their operation, back up alarm, soot or exhaust deposits, exhaust pipe, and any loose or hanging wires.

Module 8. Right side of the bus:

- Check rear tires, inflation, wheel

lugs, side panels, mud flaps, all glass and turn signals.

Module 9. Wheel chair lift:

- Follow manufacturer's inspection guidelines and operate as instructed.
- Look for loose electrical connections, oil leaks and any homemade parts attached to the lift.

✓ For technicians only:

Module 10. Under the bus (front):

- Check for leaks, smell of burning oil or rubber.
- Check tread and inflation; inspect gearbox, steering, brakes.

Module 11. Under the bus (center):

- Check for leaks, hanging wires and hoses.
- Check driver shaft and guards, inspect all body attachment bolts.

Module 12. Under the bus (rear):

- Inspect for any leaks.
- Check for the smell of raw fuel, burning oil, other parts.
- Inspect exhaust pipe for corrosion.
- Check rear tires.

Again, while not inclusive of all the checks this process could be tailored to fit, the modules start and end the same way with all buses.

Go ahead, try it out. The returns can be a "harmonization" of cost savings, safety enhancements and a uniform inspection technique to complement your total preventative maintenance program.

For more detailed information, call CalAct at (800) 422-5228. Implementing this program will bring music to your ears.

Source: *CalAction*, Autumn 2000, Volume 16, No. 4, a newsletter of the California Association for Coordinated Transportation, Inc. Reprinted with permission. ▲

Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

April 24, 2003
Kansas RTAP/CTD Advisory
Committee Meeting
Emporia, KS
Contact: Pat Weaver
Phone: (785) 864-2595
Email: weaver@ku.edu

April 28-May 1, 2003
Managing and Planning for
Rural and Small Urban
Systems
Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Maribeth Sacho
Phone: (414) 227-3337
Email: msacho@uwm.edu

May 4-8, 2003
American Public Transit
Association Bus and
Paratransit Conference
Milwaukee, WI
Phone: (202) 496-4800

May 18-23, 2003
CTAA Annual Expo
Philadelphia, PA
Contact: Charlie Dickson
Phone: (202) 661-0208
www.ctaa.org/expo

June 2-4, 2003
Passenger Assistance:
Certified Basics for Trainers
Milwaukee, WI
Phone: (414) 227-3181

June 13-16, 2003
National Association of Area
Agencies on Aging
Baltimore, MD
Contact: Martin Kleffner
Email: mkleffner@n4a.org

June 23-24, 2003
Efficiencies in Paratransit
Scheduling and Dispatching
Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Maribeth Sacho
Phone: (414) 227-3337
Email: msacho@uwm.edu

September 14-16, 2003
KPTA Annual Meeting
Overland Park, KS
Phone: (913) 492-9092

September 29-30, 2003
Shared Ride/Demand Response
Operations
Milwaukee, WI
Contact: Maribeth Sacho
Phone: (414) 227-3337

Editor's Note:
To include meetings or work-
shops in our calendar, send
information to:
Kansas Trans Reporter, KUTC,
1530 W. 15th St., Room 2011,
Lawrence, KS 66045.
E-mail: weaver@ku.edu

Public relations, continued from page 10

Commerce Tourism Committee, and I've participated in the Harper County Leadership School." She has also attended information-sharing luncheons with representatives from other organizations.

Agency managers, especially those who have been with their transit system for a long time, often become the public's focal point for the agency, so it is important to make that effort and let people know who you are. If the public recognizes you, the chance is much greater that they'll remember your agency when they need a ride—or when they're thinking about what to do with some unallocated local funds.

Transit's second role in the community relations process is broader, and involves a variety of individuals within the agency—from the manager who sets up special services to the drivers and dispatchers who work extra hours to make sure these functions go off without a hitch.

Shellhammer had an example

from Harper County: "At the Anthony High School reunion, we did some bus trips around the community to show the alumni how it's changed...We drove them out to see the new cotton gin." She also noted, "You get asked to do a lot of things once people know you will." But that's not exactly a bad thing, especially when you consider how much Kansas transit needs community support.

Public relations, as we have seen, goes well beyond the realm of media relations, which (although important) does not come naturally to many agency managers. Community relations, the second half of public relations, is part of what many Kansas transit agencies do best—relate to the people and organizations of their communities. As Shellhammer emphasized, partnering and cooperating with others is vital. Transit is definitely a game for those who play well with others.

Source: *A Handbook for Effective Advertising and Marketing of Community Transit*, CTAA, June 1989. ▲

Accessible marketing, continued from page 9

are kept up to date. Accessible documents should be updated at the same time as print documents.

For more information

For more information on creating accessible documents, consult the American Council for the Blind's publication entitled *A Guide to Making Documents Accessible to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*. Copies are available at their website at www.acb.org, or by calling (800) 424-8666.

Helpful information regarding blindness and low vision can also be obtained from the American Foundation for the Blind. Visit their website at www.afb.org.

Sources:
American Foundation for the Blind;
American Council for the Blind. ▲

Resources Order Form

Please use the order form on this page to borrow the CD-ROMs described here. They are each available for a two-week loan.



The following three FTA publications are available for download from:

<http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/Publications/Default.asp>.

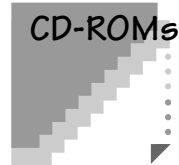
As an alternative, you may fax a request to the Volpe Center at 617/494-2684.

- **Implementation Guidelines for Drug and Alcohol Regulations in Mass Transit**
- **FTA Best Practices Manual: FTA Drug and Alcohol Testing Program**
- **FTA Drug and Alcohol Assessment**

The following publication is available for download from Kansas RTAP at:

<http://www.kutc.ku.edu/rtap/tech>

- **Handbook for Effective Advertising and Marketing of Community Transit**



Delaware's Transit Safety Training and Bus Evacuation Audio-Visual Presentation. A vehicle evacuation demonstration created by the Delaware Transit Corporation and made available on CD-ROM. Available for loan from Kansas RTAP.

Transit Safety & Security Prototype Approach. Produced in 2002 for the Colorado DOT based on FTA's draft Model Bus Safety Program. Includes a notebook and CD-ROM. Available for loan from Kansas RTAP.

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Kansas Trans Reporter

The *Kansas Trans Reporter* is an educational publication published quarterly by the Kansas University Transportation Center. The newsletter is distributed free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The *Kansas Trans Reporter* is co-sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Kansas Department of Transportation. The purposes of the program are to: 1) educate transit operators about the latest technologies in rural and specialized transit; 2) encourage their translation into practical application; and 3) to share information among operators.

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Project Director Pat Weaver
Editor Lisa Harris
Editorial Assistant Ira Allen
Student Writers Ira Allen, Matthew Kaufman

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