



Kansas Trans Reporter

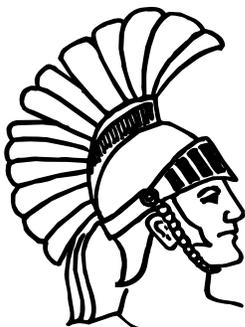
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The Newsletter for Kansas Rural and Specialized Transportation Providers • The University of Kansas Transportation Center

Road(eo) Warriors

by Ira Allen

Imagine yourself in front of your desk, a worried crease in your forehead as you try to decide how to cut expenses while keeping all your existing routes and serving more riders. The phone rings. On the other end is someone from the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Or the American Public Transportation Association or the Federal Transit Administration. Or your state transit association, the Kansas Public



Transit Association. Your forehead uncrinkles as you listen to the good news. Your agency has won an award for excellent service! The flush of success you feel makes the worry worthwhile, and you remember why you love your job. It helps to receive recognition that your efforts are appreciated, especially during trying times.

While these awards are satisfying to receive, they do not acknowledge individual effort. The entire agency has won the award. Most managers quickly assert that drivers do all the "real" work. [This is a half-truth; everyone associated with

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The Board's Role in Developing a Mission Statement

by Ira Allen

We've carried several articles in recent issues about creating a mission statement. This one describes do's and don'ts for the board.

Although the actual writing of a mission statement is best performed by an individual, the Board can and should be involved in the creative process. Following are some simple guidelines can help keep the group's role and the writer's role separate, which

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Transit roadeo,

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the agency does “real” work.] But the manager gets the phone call, accepts the award, and often experiences the majority of the gratification that goes along with that. There are relatively few opportunities for drivers to be directly recognized for their accomplishments by organizations outside the agency. Transit Rodeos provide such an opportunity.

What’s a roadeo?

A transit roadeo is an event designed to test a transit operator’s skills in various areas: wheelchair loading and securement, pre-trip inspections, and driving, and also includes a written test, explained Kelly Shawn, coordinator for the National Community Transit Roadeo. Jim Holman of New Jersey Transit (a member of the planning committee for the National Roadeo and coordinator for the New Jersey State Roadeo) expanded on this: “It’s a way for drivers to get recognition for the excellent job they do everyday—it’s all about the driver.”

So why organize a roadeo? Who should get involved? And what do they need to know? These questions and others like them are explored in this article.

Why a roadeo?

First and foremost, a roadeo is for the drivers. Kelly Shawn said, “Transit drivers don’t always get the recognition they need; they’re the front line of the transit system, and this is a way to showcase their skills.” A Roadeo lets drivers show off the talents they work hard to maintain every day, in an atmosphere that puts them in the public eye and gives them some very real credit for the work they do. As Jim Holman said, “It’s the only big thing that’s given back to the drivers all year. They’re

the most important asset that we have. Give back to them.”

Rodeos not only give back to drivers, but also encourage safer driving. The obstacle course driving test is the backbone of the roadeo, and doing well on that test requires a lot of day-to-day experience in driving safely. Furthermore, to compete, drivers must have a safe driving record for the year prior to the roadeo.

Holman noted that New Jersey has a traveling trophy that goes to the employer of the State champ. This, along with testimonials from other drivers about the good time to be had at a roadeo, can motivate drivers to work extra hard to maintain safe driving records so they will be eligible to compete the next year.

Beyond driver morale and safety issues, roadeos also affect system morale and management. After all, if a driver from your agency places in the state or national roadeo, that certainly reflects well on your training

across the board. In response to this, CTAA developed a pre-trip inspection form that could be used by any organization, and gave it to drivers who competed in the roadeo. A lot of them said, “This is a great form!” and took it back to their agencies. In this case, the Roadeo showed the transit community an area where improvement was possible, and resulted in a new tool for providers.

Who makes a roadeo happen?

“You do!” is the short answer, but as you might well imagine, it goes quite a bit deeper than that. In fact, Holman emphasized, “It takes a committee; one person can’t do this alone.” He and Shawn agree that the first thing to do is form a roadeo planning committee, which will develop the tests and scoring standards for the roadeo, as well as handling various other tasks, such as choosing a site and securing vehicles for the event.

A roadeo definitely builds the morale of the transit community, and helps agencies see what kind of service they are providing to their customers. It shows what can be improved upon and what’s being done well.

process and safety practices. Shawn said that a roadeo “definitely builds the morale of the transit community, and helps them see what kind of service they are providing to their customers.” It shows “what can be improved upon and what’s being done well.”

Shawn gave an example of how roadeos can act as a process improvement tool: Four years ago, the Planning Committee for CTAA’s National Transit Roadeo evaluated all the roadeo scores and found that pre-trip inspections were a weak point

So who might be members of your planning committee? Your neighbors, children’s friends’ parents, or relatives? Probably not. The National Planning Committee is made up of State Roadeo planners, transit agency managers and consultants. In New Jersey, Holman goes to the State Transit Association and asks them to provide the planning committee. “For many years,” he said, “I did it myself, and it’s an extremely time-consuming, thankless task.” Not that he isn’t still heavily involved, but

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Obstacles, anyone?

Here is a sample “menu” of roadeo obstacles and a set of criteria for judging contestants. It’s adapted from the Wyoming Public Transit Association’s (WYTRANS) *Bus Roadeo Manual*, graciously lent to us by Steve Kurtz, administrative consultant for WYTRANS and compiler of the manual.

Obstacle 1: *Left/Right Turn.* Tests the driver’s ability to make a tight 90-degree left turn in a close situation. Driver is required to wing the bus into a 90-degree turn and not touch any of the markers, even though s/he will lose sight of the marker cones. Driver is assessed a penalty of ten points for each cone touched. Vehicle must remain in motion. Ten-point penalty for each stop.

Obstacle 2: *Serpentine.* This tests the driver’s ability to negotiate tight turns. Contestant is required to enter the obstacle, weave in and out through three cones, and exit without touching any of the cones. Ten-point penalty for each cone touched. Vehicle must remain in motion. Ten-point penalty for each stop.

Obstacle 3: *Passenger Pickup.* Contestant is to make a proper stop at a curb area as if for boarding a passenger. Ten-point penalty if right front tire is not within minimum distance from curb. Ten-point penalty if tires hit curb. Five-point penalty for each cone struck. Five-point penalty each time transmission is shifted into reverse. Driver must wait for judge’s ‘okay’ before proceeding to next obstacle.

Obstacle 4: *Back In.* Driver is to negotiate a 90-degree reverse turn into a pre-marked parking stall, being sure the entire vehicle is within the stall before stopping. Driver must then pull out of stall and continue to next obstacle. Five-point penalty for each cone touched. Five-point penalty for each time transmission is shifted into reverse, except for initial backing movement. Five-point penalty for not positioning vehicle completely within stall.

Obstacle 5: *Diminishing Clearance.* Tests driver’s ability to judge position of his/her vehicle; requires driver to drive through a narrow, V-shaped channel while keeping the vehicle in motion. Five-point penalty for each cone touched. Ten-point penalty for stopping the vehicle.

Obstacle 6: *Judgment Stop.* Tests driver’s ability to judge a closing distance between the bus and a small object directly ahead. Driver must come to a complete stop, put vehicle in park, set emergency brake and wait while being scored; bus must stop within six inches of cone for a perfect score. One-point penalty for every inch farther away than the initial six. Twenty-five point penalty for striking a cone. Once bus comes to a complete stop, no further movement is allowed. Twenty-five point penalty for movement after initial stop.

Obstacle 7: *Forward Offset Street.* Tests driver’s ability to judge vehicle position, requiring him/her to drive through two separate narrow lanes that are offset one full lane-width from each other. Five-point penalty for each cone touched. Ten-point penalty for each transmission shift into reverse.

Obstacle 8: *Parallel Parking.* Designed to measure the driver’s ability to park parallel to curbing, this obstacle requires considerable skill in backing, steering, braking, accelerating, and mirror use. Driver is to back into stall as though parking between two vehicles. Five-point penalty for each cone touched. Five-point penalty for each tire not within minimum distance from curb. Five-point penalty for not centering vehicle in space. Five-point penalty for each shift into reverse after initial backing movement. Ten-point penalty if tire hits curb.

Remember that the obstacle driving course is only one of four testing stations. The other three often include a written test, a wheelchair lift station and a pre-trip inspection station.

Transit roadeo,

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he learned from bitter experience that it's far more practical to organize a committee including other transit professionals than to shoulder the entire weight of organizing the event. This principle should be familiar to those who have been involved with planning large celebrations or events of any kind. A harmonious group can usually accomplish tasks that would leave a lone individual struggling in the muck.

For those thinking about holding a transit roadeo on a smaller level—say, a CTD-wide (Coordinated Transit District) Roadeo—the list of people you can ask to join your committee shrinks a little. You may still talk to the state transit association, but most likely, you will have to find committee members from the management of the various agencies in your district. You may find transit consultants, if they operate in your locality, also willing to donate some of their time. Other potential committee members include local citizens with experience organizing events, city councilmen/women, and drivers from participating transit agencies.

How do I do this?

So you're holding a CTD-wide roadeo, and have formed your committee. Where do you go from here, and what do you need to know to get there? First, said Holman, you have to know that it takes time. "Roadeos can't be planned overnight—they take commitment and long-range planning," he said. Next, both Holman and Kelly Shawn agreed that securing a location was the most vital action the committee could take.

"It takes up a pretty sizable parking lot," said Shawn, noting that CTAA has in the past used mall parking lots, stadium parking lots,

and fairground parking lots as locations for the National Roadeo. He cautioned that often the obstacle course must be built around light-poles or planters, as the ideal of a "big, flat parking lot with nothing on it" is not always attainable.

Lot size is important because the course and the attendees together take up a lot of space, regardless of how big or small the event is. The course, marked with cones the drivers must drive between, frequently has between 10 and 12 obstacles, including a right-hand turn, serpentine, left-hand reverse park, and other similar everyday actions.

Remember, too, that the site must be available for two days: one to

Lot size is important because the course and the attendees together take up a lot of space.

set up the course, and one for the actual event. Typically course set-up will take place on a Saturday (along with the written test portion of the Roadeo), and the main events will follow on a Sunday.

The second question the committee must ask is: Where will the vehicles for the roadeo come from? Do you ask manufacturers if you can borrow a couple vans and lift-equipped buses? Do you ask CTD or state transit association members? Do you ask the Kansas Department of Transit (KDOT)? These are all good possibilities.

Shawn noted that a part of the reason CTAA holds its National Roadeo on a Sunday is because "that is usually non-peak for transit systems, so they often have vehicles available." For a State or National Roadeo, this is likely to be the case, but small systems with only one or two vehicles may be very reluctant to volunteer their vans or buses on a day

when many provide at least some service. After all, if you only have one van, you still need it on an off-peak day! If agencies in your CTD are unable to provide vehicles, ask manufacturers or even KDOT; something will probably work out.

The third crucial planning element is recruiting judges and scorers. At the national level, said Kelly Shawn, "Volunteer judges are transit system managers, state DOT people, board members from CTAA, supervisors, consultants, and bus manufacturers." He said 60 to 70 percent of the volunteers returned year after year, because everybody usually has a good time. In addition to the many other benefits of a roadeo, this offers

yet another forum for professionals in and around the transit industry to network and get to know each other better in a somewhat casual setting.

For a State or CTD Roadeo, your judges and scorers could come from many of the same sources, but you might have to recruit more heavily from individual agencies to get the numbers you will need.

Holman noted the importance of having at least two judges per position. "You can't stop the roadeo because the judge has to go eat or go to the bathroom or whatever," he said. He also mentioned the system the New Jersey Roadeo uses to "take away the implications of a conflict of interest," in cases where transit agency managers could wind up scoring their own drivers. Rather than give scorers the drivers' names, scores are assigned to drivers' numbers, which are anonymous. For the Wyoming Bus Roadeo, Steve Kurtz uses local officials as volunteer

judges, and he said it works out okay. He noted that although some states, such as Colorado, prefer to hire professional judges, “We don’t get so serious that we get in a fist fight over who wins.”

Where’s the money?

Eventually, it must be discussed. Clearly, setting up a transit rodeo costs some money. Shawn and Holman each had suggestions for funding a rodeo. In New Jersey, the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) pays for the rodeo, because it is a state event. The New Jersey RTAP also pays for the first and second place winners to attend the national competition, in addition to providing for a \$300 gift certificate for each. This funding to attend the National Rodeo is a part of the motivation for drivers to compete at the State level. After all, there’s a chance they could go on to become not only the State but also the National champion!

In Wyoming, Steve Kurtz looks to a variety of sources for funding. “We solicit sponsorships from the local businesses: regional and local bus vendors, car dealers, banks, people who work with transit. Many contribute to pay for banquets, expenses for speakers, etc. Some give door prizes. We get \$2,500 a year from sponsors. We used to get \$1,000 a year from WYDOT [Wyoming Department of Transportation] from their energy conservation office. [We also work with] Safety Councils, railroads, and senior citizens. The list is long and it just depends on your local situation,” he explained.

At the National level, funding sources are also diverse. National Transit Rodeo sponsors get to see their names on the t-shirt each attendee receives, as well as in the brochure for the event. Possible

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Understanding the Random Selection Process

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by Tim Harris, The Consortium, Inc.
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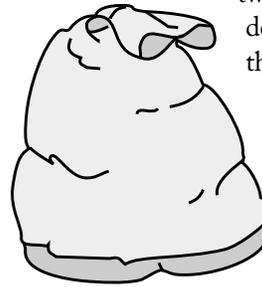
Is random testing really random? This question continues to surface in the U.S. Department of Transportation testing programs. The Federal Transit Administration program also receives their share of these questions. The Consortium, Inc., the third party administrator of the Kansas Public Transportation testing program, receives similar questions, asking why some persons get tested repeatedly while others never get tested.

One thing to keep in mind is random testing is a tool to deter illegal drug use through the possibility of being randomly selected for testing. It is not designed to catch persons thought to be drug users. Reasonable suspicion testing is available and should be used anytime there is suspicion that a person may be under the influence of drugs.

So why do some persons get selected more often than others in random testing? It is truly the “luck” of the draw and there is no good way to explain that. The Federal Transit Administration, Office of Technical Assistance and Safety produced its *Random Drug Testing Manual* in September 1991 to deal with this very question. This 83-page manual explains the random process and why some persons will end up being select-

ed more often than others and some persons will never be random-tested.

The Consortium, Inc., uses a computerized random number generator to select persons for testing. We asked our software company for a description of their random selection process and they provided us with two descriptions. The first description we will not share in this article because it is filled with terms like “algorithms” and “seeded by millisecond values of the system clock,” etc. The second description is an analogy to help understand how this random selection process works. We hope this example is helpful.



This random selection analogy starts with a bag of pebbles.

First, you need some small pebbles—as many as you have participants in your testing pool.

In some circumstances this is as few as 10 or as many as 10,000. Label each pebble with a participant’s unique identification—such as their name or employee number.

Next, put all the pebbles in a bag and shake it well. This starts the random process. Pull each pebble from the bag and place them in a complete circle clockwise on the ground, starting at the “twelve o’clock” position. All done? You should now have all your participants arranged in a random order in this circle.

Determine how many selections you want to make from this circle (and a separate number of alternates, if you wish). Next, just for an extra shot of arbitrary-ness, pick a number between one and the total number of

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Organizational Culture: What Really Guides Your Agency?

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 by Ira Allen

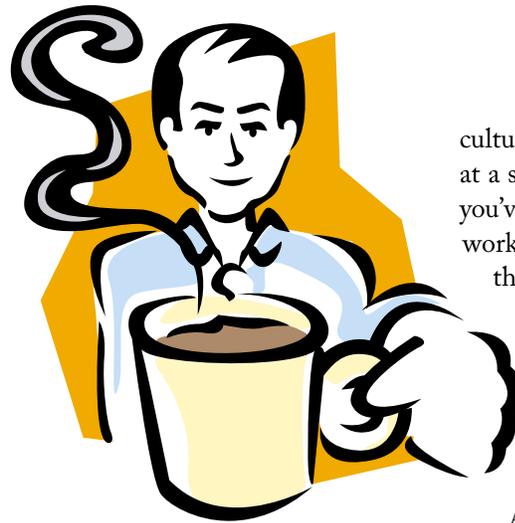
What is organizational culture, and why would anybody even bother reading this article, anyway? These are the kinds of questions I ask myself every day. The answer I usually come up with—and this might work for you, too—is, if you’re already this far in, you might as well forge on and see how things turn out...

The above represents one perspective on work, based on the value of resignation as a motivational tool. If I really felt this way about my work (and I don’t, usually), and I was the only one in the organization with a lousy attitude, it would be easy to dismiss me as a bad apple. But if one third or half the employees in the office felt this way, that could be saying something about the culture of the office.

Which brings us back to the topic of this article.

“Organizational culture,” explained transit consultant Randy Pine, “centers around the collective values and social norms that employees tend to adopt relative to their organizational environment.” These values and social norms are often unspoken.

In transit agencies, organizational culture is important. An “I don’t care” attitude in one driver is something passengers might expect from time to time, but if such an attitude is accepted or even encouraged agency-wide, that can spell disaster. Pine said, “For



the transit agency, organizational culture has a direct influence on the manner and sincerity with which customers are treated. That, in turn, can directly affect ridership.”

What does it mean?

What is the value of understanding your agency’s organizational culture?

What does this mean in day-to-day activity? What factors affect organizational culture?

“Awareness of organizational culture,” said Pine, “can aid in the facilitation of change, the enhancement of individual (and organizational) motivation and performance, and the selection and assimilation of new hires.” So, to put it simply, if you know where you’re at, it’s easier to grow from there.

Analyzing your organizational

culture is a bit like taking inventory at a supermarket. You look at what you’ve got on hand, what’s selling/working well, and what’s not, and then you make decisions and changes based on that. In a transit agency, changes based on “taking stock” can improve employee satisfaction, and that usually translates to better customer satisfaction.

Also, if you know what’s working in your organization, it’s easier to consider how potential employees’ personalities fit in with your agency’s culture.

What, then, are some factors you should consider? There are

Organizational culture starts with simple day-to-day tasks such as who makes the coffee.

many, and this article cannot do them all justice, but read the box on the next page for some examples of questions you might ask to assess your agency’s culture.

Pine noted that the process of inventorying your agency’s organizational culture can be difficult and is sometimes best accomplished by an outside entity. In response to the question of how a manager should go about inventorying her agency’s organizational culture, he had this to say:

“Assessing employee attitudes and looking for common denominators is a start. This is often difficult for organizations where the ‘climate is cold.’ Employees are reluctant to be honest [when] managers are viewed with suspicion and mistrust. A survey conducted by an objective outsider can be helpful. Surveys can look for things as seemingly insignificant as how coffee is made (individually or collectively) to more emotional issues such as the individual’s perceived adequacy of pay and benefits.”

A little understanding goes a long way

Surveys should not merely help you understand employees’ needs; they should provide some understanding of the forces swirling around your agency, and how to shape these forces. Understanding your agency’s organizational culture gives you the opportunity to push for changes—not only in the culture, but also in your own leadership style.

“A manager’s leadership style is often translated throughout the organizational hierarchy,” said Pine. “An important example is respectful communication. Employees often model the manager’s style at multiple levels. If the organizational culture is problematic, a style change can be helpful. [And he’s not suggesting a new hat or fur coat]. Additionally, simply addressing the cultural problem in an open and honest way with employees can often change momentum. A manager, like any employee, can benefit from timely, honest and accurate feedback.”

Pine points out two basic ways of approaching changes to organizational culture. The first is to talk frankly with employees about what you feel is working and what you feel is not, and then to listen to their responses. The second—and this

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What to look for in assessing agency culture

The following is intended as a starting point to help you identify unique features of your organizational culture. This can help you create your own list of questions to ask when reflecting on the “collective values and social norms” at work in your agency. Please remember, the idea here is not so much to measure how well your agency is doing in relation to your own personal set of standards, but to understand what standards and norms and values already exist in your agency.

- Are mistakes encouraged and forgiven if people learn from them?
- What sorts of mistakes are unforgivable?
- Can anyone ask questions, or is this privilege restricted to certain groups?
- Do people care about each other? Can individuals ask for help with their work and get it from co-workers or supervisors? With personal matters?
- If the phrase “sexual harassment” or another controversial topic is mentioned, what is the reaction? Is there confidence in handling controversial issues? Are procedures for such issues well laid out, consistent, and supported?
- Who is really in charge? To what degree do decisions rest in the hand of individuals? To what degree is decision-making done centrally? For example, are drivers assigned bus routes, or do they choose their own based on their pick-up points?
- Why do people stay in their jobs, rather than apply elsewhere?
- What drives volunteers to work for the agency? How do permanent staff treat volunteers?
- What factors are behind staff turnover?
- How is conflict handled at all levels?
- How great an emphasis is placed on excellence or improvement? Are there any incentives to improve performance?
- Do people use collaboration and cooperation regularly for problem-solving and decision-making at all levels? On the simplest level, for example, is coffee always made by one person, or does the duty rotate? Does just whoever happens to notice that the pot’s empty make more coffee, or does it sit for long periods, waiting for someone to care enough to act?

Some of these questions may seem overly simple, but it is essential to look at activity within your agency at all possible levels. This will help provide a clearer picture of what norms and values are actually at work in your agency.

Organizational culture,

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may be most effective after getting some input from employees—is to interact differently with your employees, trusting that this new style of interacting will impress itself upon others, and help set the tone for your agency's organizational culture as a whole.

Pine also warns, however, against assuming that such a general solution will be applicable or sufficient for every agency. He said, "Using a canned or off-the-shelf generic cultural enhancement approach without adapting it to local specific needs will be met with skepticism and can be disadvantageous."

Simply addressing the cultural problem in an open and honest way with employees can often change momentum.

Rather, it's better to shape your new policy around the aspects of your culture that are helpful and that you want to encourage, while finding ways to discredit unproductive norms and values that exist within your agency. For example, if a manager's initial response to the concept of organizational culture was one of cynicism and closed-mindedness, that might be something to look at. He could practice openness to new ideas, say, by soliciting employee feedback or scanning industry journals for ideas from other agencies. He could then use values already dominant within the organization—for example, follow-through and commitment—to apply these new ideas, even if that gets difficult.

Communicate and be consistent

As in any new effort, consistency

and clear communication will be critical in your efforts to assess your organizational culture. To be successful, this process must involve employees at all levels.

Don't be put off, however, if everybody is not immediately receptive to new ideas. Pine noted, "The realization that organizational culture affects attitude is vital." As you begin this process of rejuvenating your organizational culture, some will still be operating with the set of attitudes that prevailed under the old culture. Presenting these employees with a consistent program of action is essential in encouraging them to invest emotionally in the new culture. And the process can take time.

On their web site, Toolpack

Consulting noted, "Cultural change is neither easy nor foolproof. It can take at least one year...[and] more likely between three and six years—and it takes effort and vigilance." Patience and ongoing support are necessary.

So as you work your way towards cultural change, don't get frustrated. Remember what's at stake! Pine summed it up, saying, "The benefits of these types of programs are measured in the faces and job satisfaction of those employees. The result can be improved attendance, fewer complaints and even reduced accidents—all of which do have a direct cost benefit in transit."

Understanding your agency's culture can change the way you do business. Employees can be happier, customers more satisfied, and whole enterprise may go just a little bit

more smoothly if you take the time to learn about and work to change the forces that drive your agency's performance.

Sources

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (www.oise.utoronto.ca/~vsvede/culture.htm);

Toolpack Consulting (www.toolpack.com/culture.html). ▲

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sponsors, said Shawn, include "local businesses, bus vendors, transit associations, local systems, and people who manufacture items (like wheelchair lifts and securement systems) for the buses."

Sponsorship can help pay for t-shirts, meals, and other administrative costs that come up, such as renting large tents to house participants or photocopying lots of tests for the drivers. As Shawn noted, "It costs money to put these things on," so sponsorship is certainly an option to keep in mind while planning.

Hang in there!

Feeling a little overwhelmed? There's a lot involved in setting up a transit roadeo, and there is still more we don't have the space to talk about here (like getting the public involved). But don't be discouraged. That's why you form a committee. This is a job for several pairs of hands, and it's a job that needs to be done.

"Remember, it's not about you—the planner, the coordinator—it's about the drivers," advised Holman. Keep in mind why you are doing this. As with any other worthwhile endeavor, this can help you wade through the tasks at hand with enthusiasm. After all, your drivers deserve the effort. ▲



Making Documents “Readable”

Web access for persons with visual impairments

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by Matthew Kaufman
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Our last issue contained the first article in a series on meeting the needs of passengers with visual impairments. We discussed techniques for making large-print documents, creating Braille documents, and recording printed information onto tape. In this issue we will discuss how you can make electronic documents such as text files and e-mail accessible to persons with visual impairments.

Computers are becoming increasingly important to individuals with visual impairments; they can read text files to users, convert text documents to Braille, and allow users to manipulate text according to their individual needs. The format in which electronic documents are created and kept significantly affects the ability of individuals with visual impairments to access needed information.

Schedules, rules, and procedures for making and canceling reservations, and other ride guides are all documents you probably already

have as electronic files. When providing these files to passengers, special consideration should be given to the file format.

Select a file format

Not all programs can read all files. Even though it seems everyone has Microsoft Word doesn't mean that all of your passengers have access to it. Consider saving any files that you will distribute in a “text only” or “HTML” format.

To create these formats simply open the existing document and select the “Save as” command. You will notice you have a choice regarding the file type. Select either “text only” or HTML. [If HTML is not listed as an option, select “Web Page” instead.] After this step is completed you will have two documents on your computer—one in the original format and one in the more accessible format.

Individuals with visual impairments can use text readers to access these documents. Text readers are computer programs that read the text in documents aloud to computer users. Many of these programs cannot read the information contained in tables in a clear manner, so avoid using tables in text files.

Any document containing tables should be saved in an HTML—a programming language used on the Internet. Text readers can read tables saved in this format; however, this requires the use of special programming code that will be discussed in the next article in this series.

Text and HTML files also can

be read using “refreshable” Braille displays. These devices translate the text to Braille output that can be read by individuals with visual impairments. They allow users to read only one line of text at a time. They can interpret tables, but again, a special programming code should be used when designing the tables.

Distributing electronic files

Once you have created your accessible files you will need to distribute them. There are four main methods for doing this: on floppy disks, on CD ROMs, as e-mail attachments, and as downloadable files from your website. The method you choose will depend on the needs of the recipient.

Some computers no longer come with floppy disk drives, so you must be able to offer alternatives. Saving files onto CD is an excellent alternative. If a file is very large, a CD may be your only option with enough storage space for the file. If space is available, you should include both a “text only” and an HTML version of any file you distribute.

Providing information in these formats will require meeting the recipient in person or mailing information about the options. Allowing individuals to download the information from your website is another option, and could save both your passengers and your staff valuable time. Of course for this to work, your website must be accessible. The next article in this series will also discuss techniques for creating accessible websites.

Another alternative to CDs and floppy disks is e-mailing documents. Files can easily be attached to emails, and most recipients will be able to open any attachments.

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Making documents “readable,”

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E-mail use varies among individuals with visual impairments. Some may use refreshable Braille displays, others use text readers, and some will simply set up their email programs to display large text and icons.

How you attach files to an e-mail will vary significantly depending on the service provider or program you use to send and receive email. User guides, online help, or your Internet provider’s technical help staff should be able to assist you with any questions.

Suggestions for e-mailing files

Do not send e-mail attachments to individuals who are not expecting them, because they may think the messages are spam and delete your messages. Provide a clear description for attachments you do send.

Be sure to scan all files for viruses before sending them. If you do not already have virus-scanning software, consider buying some.

Send only HTML or “text only” files, or both. It is also a good idea to paste text into the message itself in case the recipient has any problems downloading the files.

If your e-mail program allows it, format the message text to conform to the guidelines discussed in the first article in this series. If you are unable to format the text, the recipient may be able to do so on his or her own computer.

For more information

If you would like more information on creating accessible documents the American Council for the Blind has *A Guide to Making Documents Accessible to People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired*. Copies are available at their website www.acb.org or by calling (800) 424-8666.

Web Accessibility for the Blind has great information and tutorials regarding the creation of accessible electronic documents. Their website is located at www.webaim.org.

If you no longer have a copy of our last newsletter, and would like to read the first article in this series, call us at (800) 248-0350 to request a copy.

Copies are also available through our website at www.kutc.ku.edu.

Sources

Web Accessibility in Mind website: www.webaim.org;

University of Toronto Adaptive Technology Resource Centre; American Council for the Blind. ▲

Board’s role in creating a mission statement,

continued from page 1

should head off some conflict and make for a better mission statement.

The Board’s job is to provide information to the writer, and to

Don’t get bogged down discussing commas and word choice. Send your writer back to the proverbial drawing board.

review the results of the writer’s work. Following are a few questions to discuss as a group, which should help provide your writer with the information he or she needs. It’s also a good idea to get answers to these questions from employees at all levels in your agency, to ensure that your mission statement is reflective of your agency as a whole.

- Why does our agency exist? What is our basic purpose? What is unique or distinctive about our organization?

- Who are our principal customers, clients or users? What are our market segments, present or future? What are our main services, present and future?

- What is different about our agency from 3-5 years ago? What is likely to be different about our agency and operations 3-5 years from now?

- What are our principal economic concerns, and how are they measured?

- What philosophical issues are important to our agency’s future?

Answers to these questions should be written out from the group discussion and given to the person designated to write the mission statement. Let that person pull out key ideas and bring a completed statement back to the Board.

At this point, you may make a decision to accept the proposed statement. But if the Board agrees that changes are needed, don’t get bogged down discussing commas and word choice. Send your writer back to the proverbial drawing board. Remember, you are looking for something

meaningful, inspiring and succinct, not the watery, waffly phrasing most likely to result from a group-write. As long as you set clearly-defined tasks for both the writer and the group, you should come up with something worthwhile.

Source

The Executive Guide to Strategic Planning, by Patrick J. Below, George L. Morrissey, and Betty L. Acomb, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1987. ▲

New Lift Standards in Effect

By Matthew Kaufman

In December 2002 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) issued new safety standards for lifts on motor vehicles. While the new standards will not immediately affect your operations, they may result in slightly higher lift prices down the road.

NHTSA created two new standards for lift safety so that personal-use lifts can be manufactured to less stringent standards than public-use lifts. The latter must meet the needs of many users with various mobility impairments. The cutoff point between the two standards occurs when gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) reaches 10,000 pounds. Lifts on vehicles with ratings above this amount (and all vehicles commercially operated for paratransit, regardless of GVWR) must comply with the stricter standard. This article will discuss requirements of the stricter standard.

Main goal is to reduce injuries

When debating the new standards NHTSA looked at information from the Consumer Product Safety Commission, which estimates that 299,734 wheelchair users, or 26 percent of the wheelchair-using public, suffered wheelchair related injuries between 1991 and 1995. A much smaller (but still significant) number of injuries—1,366—were caused by wheelchair lifts.

It is expected that more people will start using lifts on public and private motor vehicles as Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) require-

ments make transportation and the built environment more accessible to individuals with mobility impairments and as our population continues to age. Taking steps now to improve the safety of lifts will help reduce accidents in the future.

The new standards will limit the maximum speed of lift platforms during use, stowage, and deployment. This change will likely safeguard cane and walker users riding

Operating volume limits are designed to ensure that lift operators can always hear lift users.

on the platform as well as persons standing close to the platform.

Limits controlling the maximum noise level of lifts are expected to improve customer service. Many lift users have reported being ignored by lift operators who could not hear them. The volume limits are designed to ensure that lift operators can always hear users.

Lifts will last longer

Significantly stricter fatigue endurance tests and stricter rules regarding the environmental resistance of lifts may result in your lifts lasting longer and having fewer breakdowns. New environmental resistance standards require that more parts be rust resistant, while new fatigue endurance standards require lifts to handle more deployments.

Changes to the lift standards will also affect the number of gaps, transitions, and openings on lift platforms, the maximum angle of the platform while loaded and during unloading. The new rules will require the addition of retention devices to prevent wheelchairs from falling off lifts or

wheelchair users from falling from their chairs. These changes should also prevent users from tripping or slipping on lift platforms.

Operator errors will be reduced

Electronic devices called interlocks are being added to prevent injuries. Interlocks will prevent lifts from moving if all retention devices are not in place or if the lift encounters resistance. Deployment of outer barriers

or inner roll stops will be prevented when the lift is occupied. Interlocks will also prevent deployment if the lift's access door is closed. This final feature will prevent drivers from damaging vehicles and lifts by accidentally deploying lifts when access doors are closed. All of the changes will help prevent lift operators for making errors that could jeopardize the safety of lift users.

A new owner's manual insert will be included with lifts. The insert will specify the recommended maintenance schedule and lift usage instructions.

Financing the changes

The new rules will take effect December 27, 2004, and apply only to newly-manufactured lifts. Lift manufacturers and, in a few cases, vehicle manufacturers will be responsible for complying with the new guidelines.

As might be expected, the cost of the lifts designed to meet these new standards will likely go up. NHTSA estimates the standards will

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Are Smart Cards for You?

by Matthew Kaufman

Smart cards are slowly making their way into transit agencies across the country. As with any new technology, they have their pros and cons. Here are some tips for adopting smart card technology—without getting outsmarted.

Smart cards are the same size as credit cards, but unlike credit cards smart cards have an embedded computer chip that can be used to hold information. Typical information stored for transit purposes are user and payment information. The information in the cards is then read by machines that the card is inserted into or passed over. Cards that can simply be passed over a reader are often referred to as “contactless.”

Benefits for transit agencies

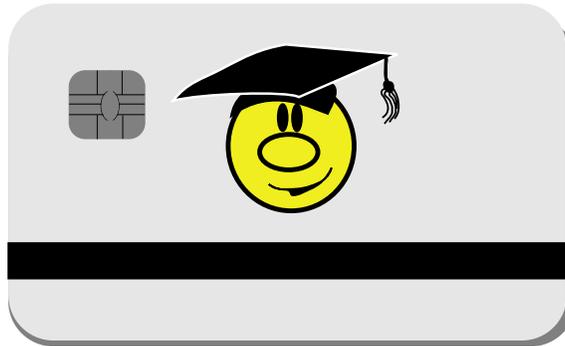
The ability to carry user and payment information on one card allows transit agencies to easily track how its customers use its services. A computer can track when your highest demand is occurring, how far your passengers are traveling, and if desired, what type of rider is using the service. The reporting is primarily limited by your imagination and riders’ expectations of privacy.

Smart cards have proven themselves in lowering the expense of revenue collection. Allowing customers to prepay for rides and carry their account information in their smart card reduces your agencies collection costs. The cards can also allow you greater flexibility in fare structures.

With smart cards and readers you can easily charge by type of rider, distance traveled, time of day, or type of destination facility.

Benefits for riders

The cards also offer added convenience to transit riders. A recent smart card demonstration project in Ventura County, California, reported that, “Many of the users reported the



card’s stored-value feature was used as an effective budgeting tool, enabling them to secure access to the transportation services that they needed. Senior citizens also found the card provided them with a greater sense of comfort and safety because they could carry less cash.”

Even with these benefits, smart cards have failed to become common within the transit industry. Infrastructure and staffing requirements have prevented their becoming commonplace.

Five essential ingredients for smart card support

Before a transit agency can successfully launch a smart card program it must be able to provide five services: 1) financial services, 2) card management, 3) customer support, 4) net-

work support, and 5) technical support/system maintenance. These can be provided by the transit agency, its system providers, or a third party.

Most transit agencies should be able to handle the first three services—providing financial services, card management and customer support. Financial services involves the collection, distribution, and reporting of funds. Most transit agencies already perform this function, and doing it with smart cards would require less work but more technical knowledge. Card management involves the purchase, distribution, and replacement of cards. Customer support means giving agency staff sufficient training to be able to assist customers with using their smart cards.

Network management and technical support/system maintenance are areas where an agency will likely need the assistance of their vendor or a third party. It is unlikely that an agency’s existing staff has the technical knowledge to integrate and maintain the systems and networks needed to track and read smart card information.

Tips for success

The Ventura County demonstration project found that successfully implementing these five services meant being willing to make changes throughout implementation. An agency’s ability to make changes will be limited by the amount of communication that occurs within the agency and with its vendors and third party support personnel.

Implementing a smart card program requires having sufficient staff on hand. While smart cards can eventually reduce the amount of time your agency spends collecting

funds and tracking ridership, implementation will require a large amount of your staff's time to learn the new system, adapt to changes, and deal with problems. If you do not have sufficient staff resources the likelihood of your agency's smart card project being successful is small.

Avoid pitfalls

The Ventura County project determined that the "system integrator," who will handle technical support and system integration, should have a local presence. Their system integrator's distance of 100 miles was too far. Ventura County's experience determined that "Excessive maintenance response time can negate any potential benefits to be derived from the smart card program. The systems integrator should have an inventory of replacement parts, which are available nearby on a just-in-time basis. It is essential that these expectations be clearly defined in the procurement and reiterated as the project is launched."

Ventura County also warns to watch out for systems billed as being "self explanatory." They found that "self explanatory" systems are often anything but. Employees must be trained on new systems. Do not expect them to be able to start using anything without adequate training.

Success is also dependent on giving your riders an incentive to use a smart card. It may be that the convenience of having rides pre-paid and stored is enough to attract users; however, if it is not, you may need to consider giving users of the smart card a discount.

Many technical hurdles remain for any transit agency that would like to begin using smart cards. Readers of the *Kansas Trans Reporter* may recall an article (October 1999) regarding KU on Wheels' attempt to use smart cards for its Lawrence,

Kansas bus system. After experiencing many difficulties the program was placed on indefinite hold.

While smart cards have great potential it may be best to allow larger transit agencies to iron out the difficulties. Of course if your agency can obtain a federal or state grant to implement a demonstration project it may be well worth your time and the knowledge you gain can serve to assist future rural transit providers.

Sources

"Smart Cards Seem a Sure Bet," by Amy Leung, *InfoWorld.com*;

"MTC Puts Smart Cards Into 4,300 Volunteers' Hands," *ITS America*, www.itsa.org;

Ventura County Fare Integration: A Case Study, by U.S. Department of Transportation, September 2001; www.americanpacific.net. ▲

New lift standards,

continued from page 11

add no more than \$300 to the cost of a new lift. However, Transport & Trolley, a current manufacturer of lifts, estimates that the new standards will add \$1,000 to the cost of a new lift.

To read more about these standards, visit the NHTSA website at www.nhtsa.dot.gov. Information is available under their "Vehicle and Equipment Information" link.

Sources

Federal Register, Vol. 67, No. 249, pages 79416-79451;

"DOT Agency Publishes Rule for New List Safety Standard" from *Transit Access Report*, January 10, 2003. ▲

Try These New Transit Resources

✓ *Conflict Avoidance: The Art of Maintaining Control*. This video-workbook combination addresses the need to avoid conflict with passengers and provides methodologies for helping to meet that need by controlling one's own attitude first. Originally developed as the basis for the "Driver Wellness" component of the PennSCORE instructor certification process, the video/workbook is now available for general distribution. Cost: \$255. Available from Pine & Associates, (785) 841-7771, piner@earthlink.net.

✓ *ADA Technical Assistance CD-ROM*. This free CD-ROM contains a complete collection of American Disability Act (ADA) materials from the U.S. Department of Justice. It includes regulations, architectural design standards, and technical

assistance publications.

Designed for easy use on laptop computers in the field, or other computers that lack high speed Internet access, the CD-ROM will make searching documents and identifying appropriate ADA information easier and more efficient.

Documents are provided in a variety of formats, including HTML, WordPerfect, and text (ASCII), to enable people with disabilities to gain easy access, translate materials to Braille, or use screen readers. Many documents are also provided in Acrobat PDF format (print optimized). Call (800) 514-0301 or visit: www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/cdrequestform.htm. ▲

Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

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

July 14-16, 2003
State Public Transit
Partnerships Conference
Albuquerque, NM
Contact: Chris Zeilinger
Phone: (202) 661-0217
Fax: (202) 737-9197
Email: zeilinger@ctaa.org

September 14-16, 2003
KPTA Annual Meeting
Overland Park, KS
Phone: (913) 492-9092
Email: kstransit@earthlink.net

September 24, 2003
Kansas Transit Managers
Grant Application Training
Workshop
Salina, KS
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg
Phone: (785) 864-2594
Email: rosemary@ku.edu

Kansas RTAP Driver Training
September 30—Dodge City
October 1—Wichita
October 2—Emporia
October 7—Great Bend
October 8—Salina
October 9—Hays
October 14—Chanute
October 15—Topeka
October 17—Manhattan
October 22—Olathe
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg
Phone: (785) 864-2594
Email: rosemary@ku.edu

October 11-14, 2003
Kansas League of
Municipalities Fall Meeting
Topeka, KS
Contact: Kansas Chapter
APWA
Website: www.apwa.net

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

Random testing, continued from page 5

pebbles in your circle. You will use this number in the next step.

Look again at the twelve o'clock position and spot the first pebble you put down. Count pebbles clockwise until you have counted to the number you just selected. Now you are ready to begin making the actual selection(s). Choose this pebble and start counting to the same number again. That pebble will be your second selection. Continue in this way, clockwise around the circle, counting and picking up pebbles until you have the number of selections you want. Put these aside in their own pile.

¹Let's say you chose the number 10 and you had five primary selections to make. You would select the 10th, 20th, 30th, 40th and 50th pebbles around the circle.

² Be sure to note the order in which the alternates were selected so they can be substituted for absentee primary selections in that order.

These are your primary selections.¹

Continuing where you left off, and in the same way, pick up the number of pebbles equal to the number of alternate selections you

want to have, and put them aside *in the order you selected them*. The order is important for alternate selections.²

When performing your selections, it is perfectly acceptable if you pass the twelve o'clock position, even several times. Realize that you can only pick up to 100 percent of the pool—no more.

Using this method, everyone agrees that each participant had an equal and random chance of being selected, right?

So, getting back to the original question—why are some people chosen more often than others? Because

every time you make selections for testing, you start from scratch. Everyone is eligible for testing every time you test. Some people are bound to be chosen again.

Now here's a really strange thing: Those employees who were chosen to be tested the very first

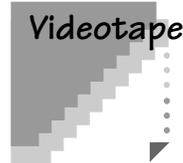
Every time you select employees for testing, you start from scratch.

time your agency conducted tests have a greater likelihood of being chosen again. And if they are chosen twice, they have a greater likelihood of being chosen again after that! Random testing statistically produces a bell curve, with some folks in the middle of the curve who end up getting tested more often. Just by chance. There's no explaining it.

The above analogy is very close to how our computerized random number generator works. I hope this is helpful in answering your questions about the random selection process, even if you don't like the answers! ▲

Resources Order Form

Please use the order form on this page to borrow the videotape described here. It is available for a two-week loan. Feel free to keep the publications.



Wytrans Bus Road-*eo* Manual. Includes instructions for how to put on a bus road-*eo* and course layout, score sheets, and judging guidelines. Compiled by Steve Kurtz for Wytrans, February, 1997. Available from KUTC by permission.

The Public Transportation System Security and Emergency Preparedness Planning Guide, Final Report. Published by the Federal Transit Administration, January 2003. Available on-line at <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/publications/security/planningguide.pdf> or in hard-copy from the KUTC.

Ventura County Fare Integration. Available online at www.itsdocs.fhwa.dot.gov/JPODOCS/REPTS_TE/13479.html.

Community Inclusion Driver. Produced by the University of Southern Mississippi for Project Action. This two-minute tape includes two sample "community inclusion" public service announcements targeted to persons who are elderly or who have disabilities. Available for loan from Kansas RTAP.

Where to Send Order Form

Fax your completed order form to 785/864-3199 or send it by mail to:
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1530 W. 15th Street, Room 2011
Lawrence, Kansas 66045-7609

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Street Address		Email Address	
City	State	Zip + 4	Date Materials Needed

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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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Other services In addition to publishing the *Kansas Trans Reporter*, the Kansas RTAP program offers a variety of other educational services. Following is a partial list of these services:

- Publication dissemination
- Technical assistance
- Telephone consultation
- Training development
- Web site
- Program planning assistance
- Video lending library
- Computer database searches
- Referral services
- E-mail discussion group

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Kansas RTAP staff Assistance can be obtained by contacting a *Kansas Trans Reporter* staff person at the numbers or address above.

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