



Kansas Trans Reporter

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

Kansas RTAP sets 2004-2005 training schedule

by Pat Weaver

Are you curious about the workshops and other training opportunities coming up for your agency personnel? The Advisory Committee of the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) met earlier this spring to set the training program for the upcoming year, starting July 2004. They have planned a very comprehensive set of programs for Kansas transit agencies, with opportunities for both drivers and managers.



Driver training

Kansas RTAP has added a spring/summer driver training series to the regular schedule. This training will be available in addition to the traditional fall series. The Advisory

Go to page 3

FTA guide educates about grant process

by Ira Allen

With its *Federal Transit Administration Guide for Rural Programs 2003—Transit: A Lifeline for Rural America*, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has assembled a valuable, reasonably simple guide to its programs for rural transit providers around the nation. Recognizing, as the guidebook says, that “FTA’s grant processes can be difficult to navigate,” the authors designed this literature specifically for small communities and rural transit

Go to page 4

Inside:

Transit advice for caregivers
Page 2



Training about the dangers of drug and alcohol use
Page 4

Risking cooperation in risk management
Page 5



Brainstorming the castle walls
Page 7



Marketing transit—huh?
Page 9



Fire safety training
Page 11

Buying a new puppy—I mean, computer
Page 12



PASS recertification available on-line
Page 13



Calendar
Page 14

Resources
Page 15



Transit advice for caregivers

by Courtney Hansen

Caring for a person with a disability can be both challenging and rewarding, and it can enrich the lives of the person receiving the care, the caregiver, and even those around them. One aspect of care giving is aiding with transportation, and one way to deal with transportation challenges is to learn from others' past experiences. With this in mind, Easter Seals has published a guide, *Transportation Solutions for Caregivers*. The guide includes helpful information for caregivers as well as an extensive list of resources to aid caregivers in helping with transportation. This article will describe some of the techniques from the guide that are useful to anyone who assists in transporting individuals with disabilities.

Providing specific assistance

When working with someone with a disability, is it important to ask before providing assistance. When transporting someone with a vision impairment, it is also a good idea to communicate in advance exactly what is happening and why. Be specific when giving directions; for example, when you are transporting persons with vision impairment, seat them so that they will exit the vehicle on the non-traffic side, whenever possible.

Pain can be a severely disabling condition to that and also deserves some special consideration. Allow time for the rider to exit the vehicle, and assist gently, as movement may be painful. A person in pain may not

be able to fully communicate her discomfort, so yes or no questions may aid in communication.

Seizures can and do happen in the course of transportation, and can be quite alarming when you haven't been trained in how to respond.

Notify your dispatcher as soon as



possible to alert her to your situation. Do not attempt to restrain the passenger, but do try to clear the area around him so that surrounding objects don't interfere with his movements and to minimize injury to the passenger. Don't try to put anything into the person's mouth, especially your fingers. Contrary to popular belief, a person having a seizure won't swallow her tongue. Call for assistance if the seizure last more than ten minutes, or if it is followed soon by another seizure. Finally, when the seizure is over, allow the rider to rest, if needed, before you proceed.

Effective communication

Establishing good communication is essential for forming understanding

and trust between two people, and this certainly extends into the world of caregivers. Communication can be jeopardized by our natural tendencies to judge other people, but it is important to remain open, calm, and composed. Good communication can be more easily established by following these principles:

- Use positive body language, and remain calm. It will be easier to deal with unforeseen circumstances if both you and the rider approach them constructively.
- Speak directly and clearly.
- Give directions and information step-by-step for simplicity.
- Be patient, allow time for a response, and don't interrupt.
- Avoid argument, try to empathize, and ask questions if you don't understand and to show that you're listening. This will show that you are open to communication. In addition, lowering the pitch of your voice and rephrasing your statements in a clearer manner can help people with hearing impairments understand you; avoid shouting, as this actually raises the pitch of your voice. Higher pitches are often harder to hear than lower ones.

Dealing with anxiety

Transportation can be a new and foreign experience, and this can cause anxiety for both the rider and caregiver. Following are some strategies for remaining calm:

- Pay attention to your body language; remember that actions often speak louder than words.

- Get as much information as possible about the trip so that you can best help the rider get to her destination.
- Try to keep the vehicle free of clutter, reduce bright lights, and maintain a comfortable temperature.
- Avoid arguing. Work with the passenger rather than against her. In the event that a rider does become agitated, there are also strategies that may help in calming her down. If she grows argumentative, it is often more productive to cooperate than try to convince her otherwise. For example, if she doesn't want to enter the vehicle, ask her why, and take her beliefs into account when reasoning with her. It also may be helpful to offer a distracting activity, like a book, magazine, or candy.

While providing transportation can be taxing for caregivers, the Easter Seals guide can certainly help address some common concerns. For more information, visit the Easter Seals website at: www.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/Transportation_Solutions.pdf?docID=2081. ▲

Training calendar,

continued from page 1

Committee decided that having both a spring and fall schedule would provide training opportunities to drivers starting employment after the fall series and for agencies that would like to send drivers to training twice a year, rather than having their entire staff out on training in a single day.

The driver training sessions this year will feature more hands-on training for passenger assistance including use of wheelchair lifts and securements.

We've just finished up the first spring/summer series, with training in Great Bend, Salina, Chanute, Wichita and Topeka.

The Fall 2004 driver training schedule will be as follows:

October 5—Garden City

October 6—Wichita

October 7—Emporia

October 12—Manhattan

October 13—Pittsburg

October 14—Topeka

October 30—Olathe (a date change from the original)

In addition to these driver training sessions, six sessions will be scheduled in March and April 2005.

Manager training

Leadership and Service Excellence.

A two-day session is coming up on August 24-25, 2004 in Wichita on leadership and service excellence.

This session, featuring instructor Ream Lazaro of Lazaro & Noel, will feature training on developing service excellence that includes dealing with customer complaints and providing service that is compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Brochures for this training have been sent out to Kansas transit agencies. If you have not received one, or need a duplicate, contact the Kansas RTAP office at (785) 864-2594 (mornings) or go to the Kansas RTAP web site at www.ksrtap.kutc.ku.edu. Select the training calendar and scroll down to the workshop listed in August.

Preparing KDOT 5310 and 5311 Applications. A workshop will be held this fall to assist agencies with completing applications for funding from the Kansas Department of Transportation. Participants will have the choice of two dates/locations: The first session will be held in Topeka on November 3 and the second session in Wichita in November 4.

Additional information about this workshop will be sent out in early

September.

Financial Management for Rural and Small Urban Transit. A financial management workshop will be offered for transit agencies in the four-state region of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa. This two-day training is planned for late February or early March and is targeted to executive directors and agency finance managers. This training is a newly-revised program which provides excellent guidance on audit requirements for rural agencies and a comprehensive handbook.

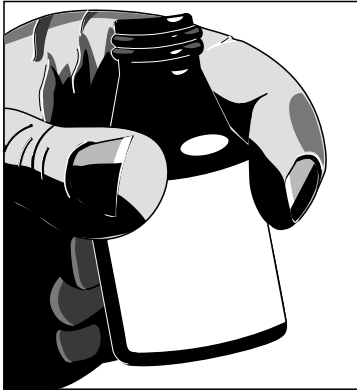
National Conference on Rural and Intercity Transportation. The National Conference on Rural and Intercity Transportation, held once every two years, is being held in Roanoke, Virginia on October 24-27, 2004.

This conference is an excellent opportunity for managers to attend a national meeting that specifically targets issues of rural transit agencies. For more information, go to the conference web site at www.ctav.org/trb/ or call Pat at (785) 864-2595 for additional information.

Obviously, the opportunities for training for rural agencies is growing. In addition to face-to-face training opportunities, Kansas RTAP has many materials available for in-house training through our video/publication lending library. We can also assist with setting up training in your community that meets the needs of your agency your particular community. Contact Pat at Kansas RTAP at (785) 864-2595 or email her at weaver@ku.edu for assistance. ▲

There's no excuse for not providing training about dangers of drug and alcohol use

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by Courtney Hansen
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Even though training about the dangers of prescription and over-the-counter medicine is strongly encouraged by the Federal Transit Administration, not all FTA employers provide it. However, this training is *essential* for safety-sensitive employees, and is necessary for minimizing safety risks.

An effective training program can take many forms, but should include the following:

- An overview of your agency's Rx/OTC policy and applicability to employees, as well as a description of policies for notification and reporting—and consequences of policy violations.
- Definitions of prescription and over-the-counter medicines, lists of common medications, side effects, and risks associated with use.
- How to read labels and pharmacy information sheets.
- Responsibilities of the employee and employer.

Training can be incorporated into a larger topic such as drug and alcohol awareness or can be conducted as a separate unit. It is helpful to have a medical practitioner involved in the training or available for questions.

Materials for training can be obtained from a variety of resources, including the U.S Food and Drug Administration Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (www.fda.gov/cder) and the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality (www.ahrq.gov). Materials range from pamphlets to bulletin board displays, and all are valuable for providing a good, though gener-

al, introduction to the topic.

Transit-specific information can be found in the FTA's *Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications Toolkit* (8.3 MB) and *Best Practices Manual* (8.7 MB). These two guides are a good source of information for training programs. Each are available as a PDF download at <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/publications>.

Another resource for information about the effects of drugs and alcohol is the Kansas Drug and Alcohol Program Manager, Sandy Flickinger, who can be reached at sandyf@ksdot.org or (785) 386-7091. ▲

FTA guide on grant process, continued from page 3

providers. Although the guide was compiled for 2003, the information inside should hold true at least until the long awaited reauthorization of TEA 21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century).

Transit: A Lifeline is broken into six sections, each of which provides basic information. Web addresses are also listed for those interested in more detailed and specific information about programs and requirements. In section one, a broad overview of FTA program options is given. Section two concerns itself with the Section 5310 and 5311 formula programs. In Section three, the Section 5309 and 5307 discretionary programs are discussed in detail. Section four covers grantee requirements, including nice little captions with light bulbs in them, distinguishing between which requirements refer to the State and

which refer to individual agencies. Section five uses a similar format to explain post grant approval procedures and regulations. In Section six, a number of frequently asked questions are answered in good detail. One particularly helpful feature of this section is the way it explains terms; it does more than simply restate regulations that may have been confusing in the first place.

To acquire this must-have document (especially valuable in this era of cut-backs and reduced budgets), use the order form in the Resources segment of this newsletter or contact the Regional FTA office at (816) 329-3920. The guidebook may be also acquired on-line from the National Transportation Library at <http://ntl.bts.gov/ruraltransport/display.cfm?sub=Ab2&cat=18>. ▲



Risking cooperation in risk management



by Ira Allen

Managing a rural transit agency is an art, kind of like juggling hats. In a field where most managers are also their agencies' PR people, marketing agents, human resources directors, volunteer coordinators, safety watchdogs, quality control technicians and grant writers, just to name a few, people get used to wearing a lot of hats (and keeping others in the air in between times). The risk management hat can get lost in the shuffle, or even dropped, if you're not vigilant. After all, what does risk management even mean? How do you make it work? Who's responsible for it? Well, that last one's easy to answer...(!)

As for the first two questions, this article will explore these topics and suggest ways to lighten your risk management load a little.

Risk management is...

Like a lot of technical terms, "risk

management" can be slippery to define, so we asked Dave Ellis, of the David L. Ellis Agency, Inc., to rub his hands in sawdust and try to wrestle this term to the ground. He explained that risk management is a part of the overall management process; the idea is to identify issues that could turn into concerns before they actually do. If you're focused on identifying things that increase the possibility of some accident or incident ahead of time, he said, you're in the process of risk management.

In this vein, Ellis noted the importance of keeping detailed records. After all, it's very difficult to come up with a helpful analysis of what risks your agency faces if you're

1. *Dedication to the process.* "Make it a high priority, and effectively communicate that," Ellis recommended.

2. *Commitment to providing infrastructure and the required resources.* All employees should have ways to communicate concerns and to see that there's some reaction to their concerns.

3. *Understanding that risk management is a part of quality assurance.* It's not a disciplinary or punitive process.

4. *Ongoing commitment to continuing professional education at all levels, not just for drivers.* This is because, as

Unfortunately, there's sometimes a lack of adequate communication between transit and insurance agencies. Work toward a useful relationship right from the start. The right insurance professional can bring a whole lot more to the table than just the provision of insurance and a signature on the premium."

not even sure how old your buses are. Or your drivers, for that matter. A lot of the work involved with risk management centers on finding patterns in past accident data and projecting your agency's current and future processes.

Making risk management work

How well risk management works depends to a large degree on how well the transit agency manager works with her local insurance professional, and on her attitude toward the risk management program itself. Ellis identified four key aspects of the ideal manager's approach:

Ellis pointed out, "at some point management is responsible for developing and implementing the plan, so their knowledge and experience needs to continue to grow, too."

Connecting with your insurance professional

Because so many different variables are involved in risk management—from the gender, age and habits of your drivers, to the ridership volume on your routes, to typical traffic patterns in your area, and more—transit agency managers are well advised to make a close connection with their

Go to next page

Risk management, continued from page 5

local insurance professional.

Ellis suggested, “Look at the local insurance professional as a part of the management team, the same way you look at your accountant or attorney.” It’s important, he continued, to make sure you select a local insurance carrier whose professionals know about transportation and will be able to serve as a resource.

The cost of the insurance itself is just one component of the overall risk management process. The insurance community collects a lot of data that could be valuable for the transit agency in making certain decisions, even down to the color of the bus. So, the transit community should look to insurance providers as a resource, like RTAP or the community transportation associations.

Unfortunately, Ellis said, there’s sometimes a lack of adequate communication between transit and insurance agencies. Working toward a useful relationship right from the start is the way to go, explained: “By selecting the right insurance professional and establishing the right relationship—consultative, inclusive—that person can bring a whole lot more to the table than just the provision of insurance and a signature on the premium.”

So how do you select the right insurance pro? Any insurance agency, according to Ellis, should clearly be of assistance in providing objective data on individual losses and good quality data pertaining to the overall loss experience of the transit agency. It should also “be able to be a resource either for providing specific services or directing transit people to other places where services may be available,” he said. For instance, for a transit system considering new vehicle specifications, the insurance

Making the most of risk management

... by Courtney Hansen ...

- Some insurance brokers are confused by the complexities of nonprofit insurance. Make sure your broker has expertise in nonprofit issues, is familiar with your market, and is able to negotiate rates.
- Keep close tabs on workers’ compensation and other claims; don’t trust your insurance company to manage it alone.
- Consider temporary employees and volunteers when looking for potential risks. If you can show an insurance company that you have thought all of your risks through, you will be able to find better coverage.
- Look into having accident insurance for volunteers, which is similar to workers’ compensation, but avoids placing volunteers in the same group as employees.
- When it comes to insuring property, self-insure as much as you can. This will reduce your insurance costs, allowing you to spend only what you need to.
- If you are lending your agency’s name to a special event, make sure you transfer liability, in writing, to the host of the event.
- If you perform business online, consider getting cyber insurance, which is not usually covered under general liability. This covers online risks, such as credit card fraud, hacking, and information theft.
- Schedule a few appointments per year, if possible, to discuss risk management with your insurance broker. The more proactive you are, the more comfortable you will feel about risk management.

company’s loss control technical support people should be on hand to discuss issues like floor coverings and emergency exit markings. Bottom line, said Ellis, “When there is a close and positive relationship with the local insurance professional, that person becomes a very key and important part of the risk management process.”

The easiest way to help a relationship like this grow is to bring your insurance pro into your agency’s processes. Call him up and ask questions when considering policy changes, reductions or extensions of service, and other matters. Let him

be a part of your decision-making process. You’re unlikely to regret it.

So for those of you wringing your hands or quietly snowed under mountains of tasks, take heart. If you don’t already have the relationship described above with your local insurance professional, you could have, and it could save you a fair bit of trouble on down the road. And for those already in close cooperation with your insurance professional, chances are you’re not wringing your hands—at least not about risk management. ▲

Brainstorming the castle walls

by Ira Allen

“The more the merrier” doesn’t always apply in a work setting. Individuals acting alone, but accountable to the group, can often make the timely decisions that make or break a transit agency. For example, you probably don’t want to gather your board of directors or hold an agency-wide brainstorming session at 11:00 pm in a snowstorm to decide how to respond to a bus rollover that’s just hap-

“a process for developing creative solutions to problems...by focusing on a problem, and then deliberately coming up with as many solutions as possible and pushing the ideas as far as possible.”

Brainstorming is concerned far less with the value of each idea than it is with generating a large number and variety of different ideas. You can sort out which ideas are crackpot schemes and which are brilliant solutions later, but if you insist on pointing out which ideas won’t work during the brainstorming process, the brilliant solutions may never surface. Brainstorming gives a group a chance

Create a risk-free environment

Growing up in the American educational system, we get used to having our ideas evaluated. Every time we turn around, it seems, someone is slapping a grade on our work, and that doesn’t exactly go away when we hit the workplace. Performance reviews, yearly evaluations, and even the simple human dynamic of praising “good” ideas and scoffing at “bad” ones all combine to leave us very aware of the fact that other people will be judging or evaluating most of what we do say. So we build personal walls, castles that often hide our best ideas. That’s why it’s your job as leader of a group brainstorming session to create an environment where judgment is suspended, and

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“bad” ones leave us very aware of the fact that other people will be judging or evaluating most of what we say. So we build personal walls, castles that often hide our best ideas.



pened on Main Street. But brainstorming ahead of time about what agency policy should be for such an event is a great idea.

Although many ways of collecting group input exist, one of the most effective is a group brainstorming session. This article explores the concept of group brainstorming and how to lead a brainstorming session effectively. Using the methods outlined in this article will help you avoid both the room full of stonily silent non-participants and the histrionic brainstormer who flees the room, blinking back tears because his co-workers were so judgmental of his ideas. But first, let’s look at what brainstorming is and is not.

Understand the process

Brainstorming can be described as

to interact and come up with a set of solutions that each member is emotionally invested in, and that are more broad-ranging and specific than those a lone individual is likely to come up with.

The basic tenet of brainstorming is that the non-judgmental process of expressing ideas is a “virtuous circle” of sorts. That is, the more ideas you think of, without evaluation, the more likely good ideas are to emerge. The reverse, unfortunately, is also true. By evaluating or criticizing ideas during the brainstorming session, you run the risk of silencing people who might otherwise have had something good to say. So a brainstorming session should be a risk-free environment—which leads us to our next question. How do you lead a group brainstorming session?

all the participants know it. You’re “brainstorming the castle walls,” so to speak.

After gathering your group together—hopefully, a diverse group from many layers within and possibly outside of your agency—let them know that this atmosphere is different from what they are used to. Get your brainstormers thinking positively! This starts before the brainstorming begins, by introducing people who may not know one another, and trying to make everyone feel comfortable. How you set up the room can even help. For example, setting chairs up in a circle and playing a little peaceful or fun music in the background can make for a good atmosphere.

Many experts agree that a helpful

Go to next page

Brainstorming,

continued from page 7

first step is to conduct a practice exercise not directly connected with the topic at hand. For instance, you might go around the circle and ask each participant to think of one or two positive things about the fact that you are all there, in the room. Asking questions like, "What are you looking forward to in this session? Why might this be valuable?" and "What are some of the positive attributes your fellow brainstormers bring to the table today?" can set a positive tone. Even though this is just a practice exercise, write answers down on a board or on paper everyone can see. This will help participants get comfortable with seeing their ideas manifest visually as they say them.

Boldly lead the charge

Now that your group's relaxed and feeling positive, run through some brainstorming rules. A sample set would include the following:

- Postpone/withhold all judgment of ideas;
- Encourage wild/exaggerated ideas;
- Quantity of ideas is more important than quality;
- Build on the ideas put forward by others; and
- Each person and each idea has equal worth.

By explaining that ideas are valuable not only as solutions in and of themselves, but also as building blocks toward solutions, you can encourage brainstormers to build from one another's ideas. Bizarre and impossible ideas are good, since they may spark someone else to come up with a workable solution. This is a collaborative process, not a competitive one. Highlight the absolute importance of non-judgment; if partici-

pants understand you mean this, they will be more willing to take risks when sharing ideas. And, as we'll discuss below, it may be necessary to remind people during the session to avoid judgment.

Even though you've already warmed up a little bit, you may still want to start with a practice brainstorming session, especially if your participants are new to the process. In this case, pick a non-agency-related topic that will not influence anyone involved. Typical examples include "new features for cars," "new kitchen gadgets," or "new television programs." Anything is good that encourages non-evaluation and gets your brainstormers thinking creatively and in fun ways.

After warming up for five or ten minutes, it's time to reintroduce the real topic of the session. Along with a topic, you may want to prepare a list of questions, something you can refer to when necessary to get conversation back on track or started up again if things get bogged down.

Write every idea down. Ask people to jot their ideas down on their own piece of paper if they think they might forget them before you can write them down with all the ideas. If you write ideas down on a flip-chart, tape each filled page to the wall, so brainstormers can continue to spark off previous ideas.

As the session progresses, remind everyone to use one another's ideas as springboards for their own, and lightly chastise group if they criticize or sound shocked at any of the ideas. Some experts suggest that you not address individuals by name, since this breaks down the group identity you're trying to build. Remind brainstormers that this is a group effort, and encourage and reward all ideas with a smile or a compliment, even if they seem radical. Try to speed people up so they

have less time for judgment and evaluation.

Leading a group brainstorming session is a little like making popcorn. After a while, the pace of ideas will slow, and at this point, you may want to take a break. Give all your participants time to use the bathroom, drink some coffee, or whatever before starting back in. Try to keep the process fun and lighthearted, if you can, because gloomy seriousness isn't very conducive to the free and easy atmosphere that best suits group brainstorming.

One solution when ideas seem to be running dry is to get each group member to write down an idea or two on a sheet of paper. Collect the papers and redistribute them randomly, asking people to build on the ideas on the paper they're given. Doing this anonymously should help participants be less embarrassed and inhibited, and can give a dying session new life.

Eventually, however, the session has to end. Whether this is because of time constraints or a lack of new ideas, your job now is to make sure everyone knows their input was appreciated. Thank them very much for taking part, and let them know how valuable the process was, and how much you enjoyed it.

You may gather the same group together later to evaluate ideas, or you may do that yourself; either way, offering to send around a list of viable ideas for further comment would not be out of line. Once everyone leaves, collect every scrap of paper and sit still for a moment. This will give you a chance not only to evaluate the session but also to jot down any final ideas that spring to mind.

Use your results

Although whole articles could be written on what to do next, we will

Go to page 10



Marketing transit... Huh?

by Ira Allen

“Marketing is essential for any transit agency with goals for ridership, stability, and growth,” according to *Serious Business*, a text developed by the Transportation Research Board. What exactly is marketing, though? We all know it has something to do with the image your agency presents to the public, the media, and other agencies or businesses, but can we get more precise?

According to Jan Welborn-Nichols, a marketing consultant for small businesses, “marketing is everything you do to place your product or service in the hands of potential customers.” The American Marketing Association says marketing is “the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.” Let’s break that definition down a little bit.

At a transit agency, for example, your long-term organizational objectives will probably center on increasing ridership and availability of service. So, marketing is the process of figuring out how to interact with the public to reach those goals, and then the interaction itself (from how your secretaries answer the phone, to the price of a bus ride, to ads placed in the local newspaper, to gala events and celebrity sponsorship).

The individual objectives to be satisfied, of course, address needs of riders and potential riders in the community.

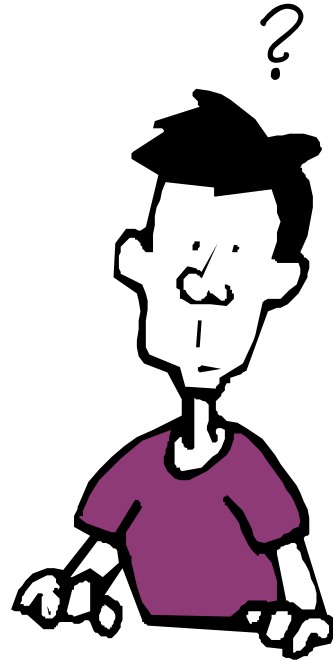
A planning process

The concept of marketing rests on the importance of customers to an agency, and states that:

- All agency policies and activities should be aimed at satisfying rider needs, and
- Profitable ridership is a better agency goal than maximum ridership.

This latter idea may seem strange, being that transit agencies are overwhelmingly non-profit in orientation, but is actually well within the realm of experience of most agency managers. For example, you could certainly increase ridership by creating a route that runs across the whole town only between two and four in the morning, but the costs associated with such a route would, in most cases, greatly outweigh the slightly increased revenue. This could create a strain on the system that could eventually result in other, more populous routes being closed (if you were really insistent on keeping this one, impractical route). So, the idea is not to make big bucks, but rather—in most instances—to focus on activities that at least partially pay for themselves, rather than activities that will be an insupportable drain on the system.

Marketing is, first and foremost, a process of planning and analysis. Many times, unfortunately, analysis is forgotten beneath the pile of tactics recommended by experts from here to Timbuktu. Tactics—such as advertising campaigns, giveaways, customer service strategies, special discounts, and many others—are vital components of marketing, and we will discuss them in due course, but our first focus should be on determining the answers to some key questions:



- What do you want for your agency? What are your key goals?
- What segments of the community do you want to convince to ride the bus (or donate funds or time, or whatever)?
- What segments of the population do you serve? What segments do you not serve, but would like to?
- What do these various segments of the community want or need? (Questionnaires can be helpful in finding answers here.)
- What are you capable of providing?
- What is practical for your agency to provide?
- How can your agency best satisfy the needs and desires of your market segment?

Armed with answers to the above questions, you are ready to look for patterns and common threads, and to decide on an overall marketing strategy for a specific goal or more general goals. How specific your goals are will determine the specificity of the strategies you use in your marketing efforts.

Strategic command

Now that you know what you’re doing (more or less), it’s time to decide how to go about doing it.

Go to next page

Marketing,

continued from page 9

A good strategy takes into account that an agency cannot be all things to all riders, and so must narrow its focus to the target markets it can serve best.

Tailoring your services, prices and promotional efforts towards your target markets is known as “Managing the Market Mix.” For a transit agency, this process has three main aspects:

- services,
- promotion, and
- distribution.

It may be most effective for your agency to focus on providing many hours of service on a smaller number of routes. Or broadening your net but reducing the level of service on each route may be the key for you.

Whatever the case, you will need to determine a set of services that fits the needs of your riders and potential riders, within the scope of what your agency can afford to do. This is something most transit agency managers may hardly consider “marketing”—it’s an important part of the nuts and bolts of running a transit agency. But this type of decision does fall under the rubric of marketing, because, ideally, it is made based on what the customer wants and needs, rather than simply on what is most convenient for the manager or agency.

Once you’ve decided on what services you’ll be providing, or what goals you hope to meet (like building a new facility, perhaps), you’ll need to find a way to get the word out. Promotion includes advertising, salesmanship (if you’ve looked for local match before, you’re well aware of the degree of salesmanship required here), writing press releases, and other promotional activities. Perhaps your agency sponsors a small carnival or gives free tours to the

local elementary school. Perhaps you have an ad in the local paper, are listed in the yellow pages, or have sent out direct mail to solicit funding or community approval for sales taxes to benefit transit. Or perhaps you let students ride the bus free the first week of school or have invested in special equipment to accommodate the visually impaired. All of these activities, and many more, fall under the heading of promotion.

Thanks to a successful promotional campaign, new riders are flocking to the bus in droves. Great! Now how much will you charge them? How long can you afford to keep fares static in a troubled economy? How much can your riders afford to pay, comfortably? Are there price levels that will keep riders off the buses? These are the questions to consider when it comes to pricing, a vital component of marketing.

What now?

You’ve introduced that new bus route, run an aggressive ad campaign for transit—on the sides of your own buses; in the paper; you even rented a hot air balloon to fly the message during the county fair—AND worked out a price scale that makes sense in light of your new, increased ridership. You’re done, aren’t you? Almost.

After marketing program decisions are made, agency managers need to evaluate how well they have turned out. Standards of performance should be set in place so results can be measured against them. Keeping data on the success or failure of your marketing efforts can be invaluable in future efforts, and will help you work out—over time—the best ways to reach the various segments of your target population. And if you understood that last sentence, you’re well on your way to becoming a marketer. Congratulations! ▲

Brainstorming,

continued from page 8

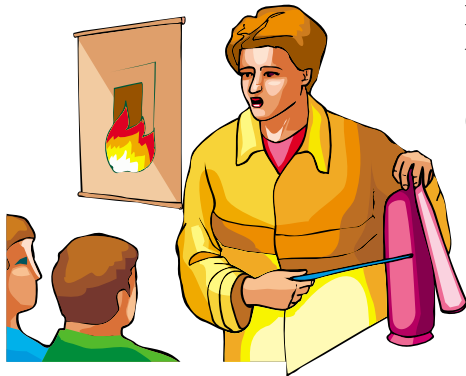
try to make a paragraph suffice. One method for post-session analysis is to sort ideas into three categories: excellent, interesting, and unhelpful. Excellent ideas will definitely work and should be implemented immediately; interesting ideas bear further consideration and investigation, and may work sometime in the future; and unhelpful are not viable for one or more reasons—they are too expensive, technically infeasible, physically impossible or otherwise unsuitable. If you are sending a list of ideas to your participants, omit this final list, since you have already determined you won’t be using these ideas.

Now that you have these lists, it is up to you to find ways to implement the excellent ideas and continue researching the interesting ones. Now we are back to one of those areas where, in some cases, a single individual might be most efficient.

Sources

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- www.psywww.com/mtsite/brainstm.html (Mind Tools, “Problem Solving and Analytical Techniques” acc. 12/06/03);
- www.winona.msus.edu/teamsCouncil/Education/brainstorming.htm (Winona State University Teams Council “Brainstorming—Creativity in a Group Context acc. 12/06/03);
- http://sc.essortment.com/whatis-brainsto_rjqg.htm (Katherine West “What is Brainstorming?” acc. 12/06/03);
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The need for fire safety training



Reprinted from *The RTAP Rap*, Vol. 11, Issue 3.
Contributor: Brian McCarthy.

Passenger safety is the most important priority of transportation. This does not only refer to safe driving, but also concerns emergency situations such as fires. Recently, the transit community in the New Jersey area had two incidents with vehicle fires, one in which a passenger died and another in which every passenger was saved. Proper training can make all the difference in emergency situations.

In the first situation, the driver left the vehicle for help and to attempt to extinguish the fire under the hood. When he realized he could not put the fire out, he then tried to evacuate the passengers only to find he did not have enough time before the vehicle was engulfed in flames. Fortunately, bystanders had stepped in and assisted in getting all but one passenger off the vehicle.

In another instance, the driver followed training procedures. He found the safest and fastest way to pull the bus off the road, remained calm and in control during the situation, and immediately evacuated the passengers from the vehicle. The bus was engulfed by flames soon after.

His quick thinking and previous training saved all of the passengers.

Passenger Service and Safety (PASS), a training program of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), provides information on how to properly handle emergencies and improve safety for everyone. In the event of the emergency, the driver bears full responsibility for himself and the passengers. In a situation where this is smoke, fire, fuel leak or other immediate onboard danger, the driver must evacuate everyone from the vehicle. It is the driver's responsibility to be calm and take charge. This puts confidence in the passengers that they will be evacuated safely and quickly.

Some situations may be difficult. In a fire, deploying the lift takes too much time and may not work. In a

collision, a wheelchair may have sustained damage and it may not be possible to evacuate a passenger using her wheelchair.

The driver must protect the passengers, him- or herself, and the vehicle, in that order. While the one driver made a valiant attempt at stopping the fire, he cost himself time to remove the passengers. The other driver evacuated his passengers before he did anything else. It is important that drivers be familiar with safety procedures before an emergency occurs. There is not enough time during an emergency to figure out what needs to be done.

Emergency situations happen. Accidents cannot always be avoided. If drivers are prepared and follow emergency procedures, they can better ensure their passengers' safety. ▲

PASS lists four basic accident and emergency procedures:

- 1** *Keep calm.* The driver is the person who must make rational and informed decisions.
- 2** *Protect the passengers, yourself, and your vehicle.* Determine if the vehicle must be evacuated or not. The passengers should be in a safe location and away from danger. Be aware of circumstances around you.
- 3** *Contact the dispatcher.* On vehicles equipped with two-way radios, give the dispatcher your name and location, that an accident has occurred, the number of passengers on board, and whether anyone has been hurt. The dispatcher is responsible for notifying emergency services to respond. Communication between dispatcher and driver should be maintained.
- 4** *Complete the required reports.* It is the driver's responsibility to completely fill out all the necessary paperwork. This is important to process the report quickly and to make sure the driver has a detailed record of the accident.



Buying the right puppy—I mean, computer

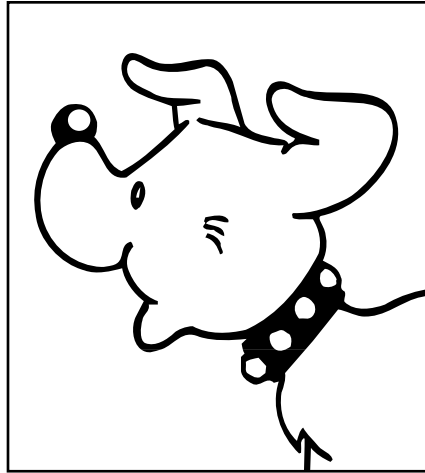
by Ira Allen

Buying a new computer is a lot like choosing a puppy; they all look cute now, but when you get home, some will make messes on the rug, others will yap a lot, and still others will chew on your shoes. So okay, maybe it's not that much like choosing a puppy, but there are some similarities. As when deciding which canine to bring home, prospective computer buyers can and should conduct some assessments to determine which computer will meet their needs. You should get a good idea of how the computer will fit with your agency before you buy, and maybe even learn a little more about computers in general. This article can help.

As with buying a new bus (or a puppy), the first thing to do when buying a computer is to decide exactly what you want and need. We've asked KUTC resident computer expert Craig Damlo a few questions about the selection process.

KUTC: How do you decide what you need in a new computer? Are there different needs brackets?

Craig: There are four general types of computer users: internet users, basic users, advanced users and developers. *Internet users* just use the computer for email and the internet, as do many folks who are retired. *Basic users* expand their use to include the Microsoft Office Suite. They may do light publishing with Microsoft Publisher, database work with Excel, word processing on



Microsoft Word or WordPerfect, or use Quicken to balance their budget. *Advanced users* may do all of the above, but also use processor-intensive software, such as graphic manipulation programs, in-depth publishing software, light programming, graphic information systems (GIS) or other design and planning software. *Developers* are hard-core computer programmers.

In public transit, there would rarely be an advanced user, but there are probably a lot of basic users who can do one thing in the advanced category. A lot of people may think of themselves as advanced users, which can end up hurting them when they buy expensive computers that do more than they need and cost more than they should have.

KUTC: Assuming most transit operators are basic users, and that most will buy a Windows system [which we used to call IBM-compatible; funny how that changes depending on who dominates the industry], how do they go about deciding what computer is right for them?

Craig: Well, the first question to ask is how many people will be using the system, and how many users will be in each of the four user categories. This lets you know how big of a hard drive you're looking for. For a large group, you should figure on at least one gigabyte (GB) of processor or hard drive space. This could last up to 10 years, storage-wise [and is a tiny amount when you figure that today's portable music players have as many as 40 GB of hard drive space on them]. The problem with buying a computer right now is that people are forced to buy more than they need. Good luck finding a new computer with less than 20 or 30 GB of processor space.

You probably need a minimum of 256 megabytes (MB) of RAM or random access memory (see sidebar on page 13). If you will have more than three users on your machine, bump your RAM up to 512 MB.

Next, think about what features you can live without. For instance, do you really need a sound card? How about a DVD burner? I recommend getting a CD burner for backup purposes, but don't waste your money on a DVD player.

Will your computer be networked with other office computers? If so, you'll need a network interface card (NIC) to connect multiple users together or to high-speed internet. Dial-up users, you probably don't need a NIC at all. These range from 100 MB to one GB in size and power; you probably will be fine with just the 100 MB card. These days you also have the option of a wireless network card, and might want to discuss that with the specialist from whom you buy your computer.

To understand RAM, think of your computer as a bus. Your processor space describes the size of the vehicle and how many passengers will fit inside. Your processor speed describes your engine; the more megahertz (MHz) or gigahertz (GHz) you have, the more RPMs your engine is capable of, and the faster or more powerful your bus will be. The more RAM you have, the larger your gas tank and the more durable your interior, hence, the longer your bus will run. With more RAM, your computer will last longer, and be able to run more applications at one time.

KUTC: Should people buy new computers, used computers, or custom-built computers? What's most cost-effective and will help providers best meet their needs?

Craig: Typically these days, you can customize any new machine you buy from Dell, Gateway, HP, IBM or Compaq. The only time you can't customize is when you buy it right off the shelf, but you're almost always better off customizing to your needs instead of just taking what they think you need.

Most basic users can buy a used computer from a developer (who will likely have used it for only two or three years) and get many more years of use out of it. Often, a local computer store will sell used computers, and big companies like Sprint sell their old equipment on their web site. E-Bay could even potentially be an option, but then you have to worry about shipping (which is usually free from Dell or whomever).

For a basic user, you should never spend more than \$800 for a desktop without a monitor. Your range will probably be from \$300 to \$800. When you go to buy your monitor, figure on another \$200 to \$600. Consider buying a flat screen rather than a flat panel monitor. Both are better for your eyes than the older, curved screen monitors, but the flat screen monitors are much cheaper. The only real advantage to a flat panel monitor is that it

takes up a lot less room.

A custom computer for a transit agency might be something along the following lines: a Pentium 1 GHz processor with 256 MB of RAM and 10 GB of hard drive space. If you are buying a new machine, this one will probably be the slowest processor you can find, and it will be much more than you need.

RAM is what's really going to make the difference for how long you can use your computer. Just as an example of what's available, you can buy right now from Dell a 2.4 GHz processor with 40 GB of

processor space, 128 MB of RAM and a 17-inch monitor for \$500. If that sounds reasonable, shop around and you'll probably see something similar you can take back to the agency. And the best part? It's guaranteed not to pee on the floor.

When you get the computer back to your office, take the time to get to know it. Each computer, operating system and software package has its own little quirks. The hour or three you spend together at the beginning of your relationship may save oodles of hardship down the road. Knowing a little bit about how the system works helps prevent costly user errors. It may even give you the impetus to attend adult education courses, opening the door to an exciting new career in the burgeoning field of computer science! Well, okay, probably not, but it might open some Windows.™ Enjoy. ▲

PASS recertification now on-line

From <http://www.ctaa.org/training>

Online recertification is now available for individuals who were originally certified under the Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Trainer Certification Program, sponsored by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). PASS training provides community transportation trainers with current information on passenger assistance techniques, sensitivity skills, bus evacuation knowledge and skills in order to train drivers to serve persons with disabilities.

To maintain your PASS certification, CTAA requires that you

recertify every three years. The purpose of recertifying is to ensure that PASS-certified professionals maintain the same level of knowledge originally demonstrated when completing the written examination for the program.

Online procedure

Step one:

Go to www.ctaa.org/training/pass/pass_online_recert.asp and click "Register for online certification." After you register online, CTAA will mail you the updated PASS trainer manual and your unique password and login ID. Please study the manual carefully before attempting the

Go to page 14

Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

July 26-29, 2004
12th Annual Transportation Training and Technology Conference
Orlando, FL
Contact: Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged
Phone: 352-392-170

August 24-25, 2004
Leadership and Quality Service, with Ream Lazaro
Wichita, KS
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg, Kansas RTAP, KUTC
Phone: 785-864-2594
Website: www.kutc.ku.edu

October 5—Garden City
October 6—Wichita
October 7—Emporia
October 12—Manhattan
October 13—Pittsburg
October 14—Topeka
October 30—Olathe
Improving Driving and Passenger Assistance Skills (Register for Event)
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg, Kansas RTAP, KUTC
Phone: 785-864-2594
Website: www.kutc.ku.edu

October 7-10, 2004
APTA International Bus Roadeo
Atlanta, GA
Contact: Lynn Morsen
Phone: (202) 496-4853
Email: lmorsen@apta.com

October 24-27, 2004
16th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference
Roanoke, VA
Contact: Elaine Lynch, Community Transportation Association of Virginia
Phone: 540-562-3900 x 200
Website: www.ctav.org/trb/

November 3—Topeka
November 4—Wichita
Kansas Transit Manager's Training: Update on Preparing KDOT Transit Funding Applications
Topeka, Kansas
Contact: Rose Lichtenberg, Kansas RTAP, KUTC
Phone: 785-864-2594
Website: www.kutc.ku.edu

Editor's Note:
To include meetings or workshops in our calendar, send information to:
Kansas Trans Reporter, KUTC, 1530 W. 15th St., Room 2160, Lawrence, KS 66045.
Email: weaver@ku.edu

PASS on-line, from page 13

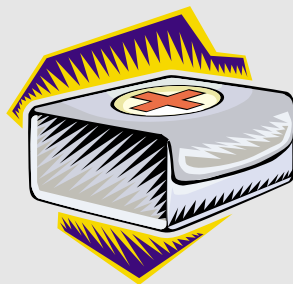
recertification examination.

Step two:

The recertification test contains 50 questions, randomly selected, and you must answer 45 or more correctly to pass. One retake is allowed. Once you are confident that you are ready to take the PASS Trainer recertification test, return to www.ctaa.org/training/pass/pass_online_recert.asp and select "Click here to access the online recertification exam" link to take the test. Should it be necessary to re-take the test please contact CTAA so you can receive a new login and password. The re-take is at no cost but will be your final opportunity to become recertified online.

Please contact the CTAA Training Coordinator at testing@ctaa.org if you have any questions or you would like to learn more about CTAA training opportunities. ▲

Advantages of PASS training



- to reduce organizational liability.
- comprehensive training on serving people with disabilities.
- intensive emergency situation training.
- certification oversight by national community transportation leaders.
- updates for participants on regulatory changes.

The cost for online recertification is \$75 which will be billed upon receipt of the online recertification request.

Resources Order Form

Use this order form to order the resources described here. Feel free to keep the publications. **Send the order form to:** KUTC Lending Library, 1530 W. 15th Street, Room 2160, Lawrence, KS 66044. Or fax the form to 785/ 864-3199.



Transportation Solutions for Caregivers: A Starting Point, Easter Seals. Undated. 24 pages. Caring for a loved one is often as challenging as it is rewarding and can affect both work and family life. Transportation can be especially taxing and time consuming. Family caregivers often rely on trial and error to solve their transportation challenges. This booklet provides tips and safe, creative solutions, devised by both family caregivers and professionals, that are designed to ease transportation challenges. Hard copy available by completing this order form. A PDF version is available at www.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/Transportation_Solutions.pdf?docID=2081

A Guide for Seniors: Finding the Right Transportation Option for You. This is a template in Word format that can be modified to fit your service and your community. 14 pages. Hard copy available by completing this order form. Electronic version available on the web at www.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/3_Transportation_Options_Booklet_Template.doc?docID=5583

Easter Seals Project ACTION. Funded by FHWA and the FTA, Easter Seals Project ACTION promotes cooperation between the transportation industry and the disability community to increase mobility for people with disabilities under the ADA and beyond. Their web site has links to training and conferences, many kinds of free resources through a clearinghouse, and technical assistance. <http://projectaction.easterseals.com>

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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

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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