



Kansas Trans Reporter

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

Kansas RTAP On-Line

Now it's even easier to access RTAP services.

by Pat Weaver

A new web site has been introduced at the KU Transportation Center (KUTC) that will significantly enhance KUTC's technical assistance services for agencies with access to the internet.

This comprehensive site allows users to check the training calendar and register for RTAP training, search the lending library catalog and order videos and publications online, download past issues of the *Kansas Trans Reporter* newsletter,



This image will greet you when you click on the RTAP link.

ter, link to other key transit-related sites, and many other functions.

The web site address for the site is <http://www.ukans.edu/~kutc>. This web address takes you to the KUTC home page, where you will

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Medicaid Transit Passes: A Winning Solution for All

by Pat Weaver

Just how well are transit solutions to Medicaid transportation needs working? A brochure recently published jointly by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Transportation provides some success stories from several states around the country. This brochure describes Medicaid transit passes as a win-win situation: wins for public transportation, for the Medicaid agency

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be able to click on the RTAP tab or other features of the Transportation Center.

The site was developed this past summer by University of Kansas students Kevin Devine and Brice

McIver with guidance from RTAP director Pat Weaver. Craig Damlo, also a K.U. student, is helping the KUTC make further refinements to the site.

We're anxious to hear your comments on this new web site and suggestions for enhancements. Take a look and let us know what you think. ▲

Medicaid Transit Passes,
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and for the transportation disadvantaged person.

The publication, *Medicaid Transit Passes: A Winning Solution for All*, was produced by Ecosometrics Incorporated and the American Public Works Association, under contract to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). It highlights savings realized by several areas around the country in implementing transit pass activities in support of Medicaid transportation.

Several models of transit pass programs are discussed: statewide—operated through brokered services; countywide—operated by county government; citywide—operated by a private non-profit agency; statewide—government-operated program; countywide—operated through a brokered system; and a pilot program in two counties overseen by state government.

The State of Connecticut saved more than \$4 million by implementing a statewide brokerage, issuing bus passes to more than 2,500 clients each month, and paying mileage reimbursement for another 400 clients. An unlimited monthly transit pass costs \$38, the cost of only two paratransit trips.

In Volusia County, Florida, a bus pass program was implemented for Medicaid recipients who had a minimum of three round trips scheduled to a Medicaid compensable service during the month. Volusia County saved nearly \$3 million, and transit revenues increased nearly \$500,000. The cost of a monthly pass to Medicaid was set at \$33.95 per month for unlimited rides on the fixed route service. Three round trips on paratransit would cost more than \$95 and would limit the recipient to those trips only.



Above: KUTC's home page has links to several programs, including RTAP.

Below: Pat Weaver, RTAP director, and Kevin Devine, web site designer, discuss changes to the RTAP home page.



A Medicaid transit pass program maximizes the use of existing vehicles, increases revenues, and increases

passes eliminate the need for advance-scheduled reservations, provide greater mobility and indepen-

make his/her own decision to transfer to a regular seat.

Ashby continues with clarifications to the ridership policies suggested in the article:

“The Conduct and Hygiene portion of the policies is generally consistent with the Department’s (FTA) rules. However, some caution is in order. The rules (49 CFR §37.5) provide that it is not discrimination to deny service to an individual because the individual engages in ‘violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct.’ However, a provider may not deny service because an individual’s disability ‘results in appearance or involuntary behavior that may offend, annoy, or inconvenience employees of the entity or other persons.’”

For example, a person who uses foul language as a result of Tourette’s syndrome could not be denied service on the basis of misconduct. An individual with a medical condition that produces uncontrollable body odor could not be denied service on the basis of “offensively poor hygiene.”

Under the ADA, as for all civil rights statutes, it is prohibited to retaliate against individuals for asserting their rights under the law. Consequently, if a passenger “argues” that the policy or service of a transit provider does not comply with ADA requirements—and advocates the position that the provider is failing to meet its ADA obligations—this is not an appropriate ground for denial of service. So long as this advocacy does not cross the line into verbal abuse, transit operators may not deny service to an individual who, even assertively and repeatedly, “gets on their case” about transportation service issues.

Generally, policies prohibiting food, drink, or smoking on vehicles

The State of Connecticut saved more than \$4 million by implementing a statewide brokerage for Medicaid-related transit.

ridership. A Medicaid agency substantially increases the cost-effectiveness of the transportation services purchased for clients, maximizes the use of transportation dollars, and improves the mobility, independence, and quality of clients.

For the client, Medicaid transit

dence, and “mainstreams” riders with general public instead of segregating them in paratransit vehicles. It’s a win-win-win situation.

For a copy of the brochure, check the order form on page 15 in this issue of the *Kansas Trans Reporter*. ▲

Ridership Policies Revisited

by Pat Weaver

We goofed. A ridership policy suggested in the last issue of the *Kansas Trans Reporter* (July 2000) is in error, but our readers helped us catch it. Bob Ashby, from the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Office of the General Counsel, provided a correction and elaboration on some of the other policies in complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Here are excerpts from his response.

Under “passenger assistance,” the article recommends several policies, including “riders who use scooters must ride in regular seating while on the bus, or be denied riding privileges.” This is directly contrary to the Department of Transportation’s ADA regulations.

These rules provide, at 49 CFR

37.165(e), that the provider “may recommend to a user of a wheelchair that the individual transfer to a vehicle seat. The entity may not require the individual to transfer.”

This was an issue the Department carefully considered during the rulemaking process. A wheelchair user is entitled (as a matter of right, not “privilege”) to ride in his or her own wheelchair (a term which, for purposes of the Department’s ADA rule, includes so-called “scooters”), and cannot be required to transfer to a vehicle seat as a condition of receiving transportation services.

Tom Davenport of Cy-Ride in Ames, Iowa, caught the mistake as well. He reports that when first implementing Cy-Ride’s ADA plan a number of years ago, they had the same reservations about having passengers on scooters staying on them while riding. They were told that the intent of that section was that the passenger should have the right to

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Ridership Policies Revisited,
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are appropriate. However, under the ADA, transit providers are required to make reasonable modifications of policies and procedures in order to make their services program accessible. For example, an individual with diabetes may need to eat a snack at 3:00 each day in order to maintain appropriate blood sugar levels. If 3:00 falls in the middle of a trip, the transit provider would need to make

an exception to its “no food or drink” policy in order to accommodate the passenger’s disability.

With respect to fares, the Department’s ADA rules establish—in the case of complementary paratransit service only—a limit of twice the fare charged to fixed route riders for a comparable trip.

Thanks to Bob Ashby and Tom Davenport for their contributions to provide clear guidance on developing ridership policies consistent with ADA. ▲

Prescription and Over the Counter Medications. In other discussion, state drug and alcohol testing managers in the Alliance reviewed FTA recommendations for including employee education on the dangers of prescriptions and over-the-counter medications in agency education programs. Grantees are encouraged to: 1) review current policies associated with operators’ use of over-the-counter and prescription medications that could threaten public safety and; 2) develop education programs that address the dangers.

Targeted medications are those that cause drowsiness or impair the operator’s cognitive or mental abilities. A list of some of the medications identified by FTA is available in the latest *FTA Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates* (Summer 2000 Issue 15, page 5). Information on obtaining this publication appears at the end of this article.

Implementing prescription and over-the-counter drug policies has been advised, but is not a formal regulation. Keep in mind that any amendments Kansas Section 5311 providers wish to implement in their drug and alcohol policy and procedures must be reviewed with through The Consortium, Inc. They will formally process these in the amendment format.

The Consortium, Inc. and the KDOT Office of Public Transportation will be drafting recommended policies for prescription and over-the-counter drugs. Transit agencies may want to wait for those suggestions before drafting their own.

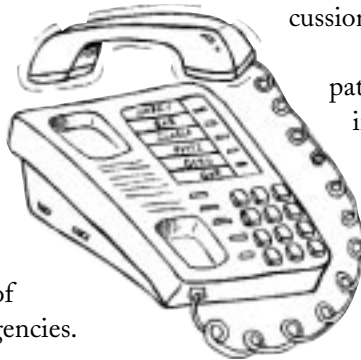
FTA has issued a revised *FTA Substance Abuse Policy Checklist*. This checklist is an excellent resource for providers reviewing policies and procedures to ensure all requirements are met. The revised checklist also is available in FTA’s *Updates*.

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Conference Call Yields Useful Information for Testing Program

by Janet E. Blue

A new consortium of state transit substance abuse professionals is helping pinpoint and solve problems associated with maintaining the U.S. Department of Transportation drug and alcohol-testing program. A recent consortium conference call discussed several issues of importance to Kansas agencies.



duties under the job title. Some have questioned whether dispatchers actually affect public safety, a condition considered when establishing who is “safety-sensitive” under the requirements of testing.

While there was some discussion about going ahead and removing dispatchers from the testing pool after States received a guidance letter from the Federal Transit Administration, it has been determined that this potential change in

regulation must go through a formal rule-making procedure.

A *Notice of Proposed Rule-Making* is expected to be published in early Fall 2000. The proposed rule is expected to eliminate inconsistencies between the drug testing and the alcohol testing policy and provide additional clarification. It will also incorporate several FTA formal interpretations made since the regulation was established.

Testing Dispatchers. The consortium, called the Alliance for State Transit Substance Abuse Professionals, discussed the status of a policy change proposed for testing transit dispatchers as safety-sensitive employees. Since the drug and alcohol regulations were originally published, there has been confusion over the testing of personnel in this position because the term “dispatcher” includes such a wide variety of job



Is Your Strategic Plan Effective?



Sharpen your pencils! This quiz will help you decide if your strategic plan needs more work.

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by Dawn Jourdan
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These days almost every organization has a strategic plan, i.e., a document that outlines specific strategies the agency may take in order to achieve specific goals. One of the main hindrances to the effectiveness of the strategic planning process is the failure of an agency to engage in continuous review of the plan. This quiz from the January 15, 2000 issue of the *NonProfit Times Direct Marketing Edition* will help you assess areas where your plan excels or needs improvement.

Take this quiz

- Do you have a well-defined business plan to support building your agency's services? (20 points for yes; zero for no). A business plan may include any formalized document created to help your business attract riders and provide additional services.
- Has your agency created a marketing campaign that provides riders with knowledge of your organization and the services it provides? (15 points for yes; zero for no).
- Are you conducting research about your clients needs? (10 points for yes; zero for no).
- Does your agency have a technology plan in place? (10 points for yes; zero for no).

—Has your agency conducted an analysis of other transit providers in the service area? (5 points for yes; zero for no). This analysis should include information regarding a number of service-related factors, including cost to passengers and areas served.

—Do you periodically poll your employees to see if your agency's mission is being met? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Do you have a clear understanding of your agency's mission? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Do you have a team in place to identify changes that need to take place in the future? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Have you set in place quantifiable measures to determine if your agency is achieving its mission? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Are you informing the public and your customers and employees of the success of agency initiatives? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Does your agency have a way to streamline communication? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Do you believe that strategic plan-

ning is helpful? (5 points for yes; zero for no).

—Is your planning process proactive, simple, and constantly seeking improvement? (5 points for yes).

How did you do?

OK, add up your points!

According to the quiz creators, agencies scoring between 90-100 can expect to grow and prosper.

Agencies with scores in the 70-85 range need to do more work in assessing the effectiveness their strategic plan or implementing specific components of the plan.

Agencies scoring in the range of 60-75 need to revisit their priorities.

Scores below 55 indicate a lack of direction that is hindering the agency's growth.

If you scored lower than you expected, don't become frustrated and abandon the strategic planning process. Effective agency planning requires constant attention and commitment.

On the other hand, if your score was higher than expected, don't assume that you are doing all that needs to be done. There is always room for improvement. The real value of this quiz is to provide a tool for your agency to start assessing how well you are implementing your strategic plan. ▲

Recipe for Saving Money

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by Dawn Jourdan
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Transit agencies cook up ideas to stretch their budgets.

Cost-cutting is not a new idea, nor is it a fad. Due to federal budget cuts over the years, public transportation agencies have been forced to look for innovative ways to provide the same valuable services at lower costs.

Three effective cost-cutting strategies are highlighted in this article.

Buy smaller vehicles

In Danville, Virginia, transit officials were able to cut costs and better serve those in need by purchasing several smaller vehicles that cost around \$68,000 each, as opposed to a few larger buses, running close to \$200,000 per vehicle.

This strategy works well for Danville because the city is able to transport more people, especially those in wheelchairs, to more places.

The smaller vehicles also increase gas mileage from two or three miles per gallon to eight miles per gallon.

Insurance premiums on the new smaller vehicles have been cut to \$7,000, instead of the costly \$27,000 on the larger vehicles.

This effort has also improved the image of the transportation authority; now, when the general

public sees the buses, they are filled to capacity, not sparsely occupied.

Create Statewide Pools

Arkansas, Connecticut and California have experimented with the concept of risk management pooling as a means to help them cut costs. "Pooling" is when agencies join together for the purpose of receiving a group discount for services such as drug and alcohol testing and vehicle insurance. For example, in California, a large group of not-for-profit transit agencies joined together under one underwriter to help reduce

the costs of insuring their vehicles.

Statewide pooling not only lowered the costs of insurance premiums for the agencies involved; this strategy also stabilized premium costs and increased safety due to better, more standardized driver training.

Consortiums sharing pooled services are saving approximately \$500,000 per year, allowing participating agencies to purchase more vehicles and increase services to meet present and future demands.

Perform Preventative Maintenance Checks

Transit providers have heard it again and again: The best way for agencies to avoid incurring substantial maintenance costs and repairs—costs that may not be sufficiently budgeted in advance—is to perform daily maintenance checks on all vehicles.

A simple walk-around inspection will help catch small problems

before they become big ones, improve service reliability and increase customer satisfaction. Most important, performance of preventative maintenance checks will increase the life span of your vehicles.

By employing simple strategies like these, your agency will be able to the most bang for its buck.

Source: *RTAP Technical Assistance Brief No. 17*, Rural Technical Assistance Program. ▲

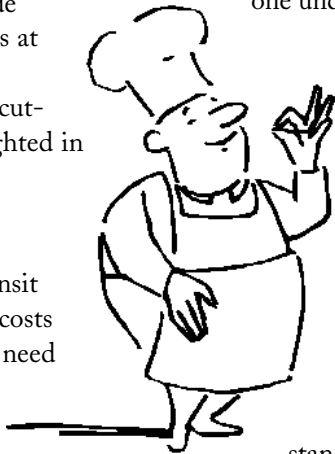
Conference Call,

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Training Available. On a final note, a free Substance Abuse Management training session is being held in Atlanta, Georgia, from October 31-November 1, 2000, hosted by the Transportation Systems Center. This seminar will cover all regulations for the FTA Drug and Alcohol Program. If you are interested in attending this seminar, contact Jennifer Whalley of the Volpe Center National Transportation Systems Center at 617/494-2686 or email at Whalley@volpe.dot.gov.

To obtain a copy of FTA's *Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates*, Summer 2000, see page 15 of this publication. If you wish to receive this free publication on a regular basis, contact RLS & Associates at 937/299-5007 or at rlsasc@mindspring.com.

Janet Blue is Drug and Alcohol Program Manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation. ▲





Hey! Look at Us!



Subtle and not-so-subtle ideas for getting noticed

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by Stephanie M. White
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Does your community know about your agency and what it does? Are city or county government officials and staff informed about your services and your needs? Is your local media informed when you begin a new service or upgrade your vehicles? If you want to increase the number of community members who know who you are and what you are doing, you need to become savvy about getting

informing them when you initiate a new program or start a fundraising campaign. Learn when their deadlines are and contact them prior to their deadlines so that they can get your news in the paper.

Think beyond local newspapers as well. Contact the Pat Weaver at the Kansas Trans Reporter (phone 785/864-2595 or fax 785/864-3199) or Scott Bogren at Community Transportation (phone 202/661-0204 or fax 202/737-9197) when you have an innovative or exciting story about your agency or the people with whom you work.

problem, be prepared to also offer a reasonable solution to the problem.

—*Make actions newsworthy.* As noted in the Citizen's Handbook, published by the Vancouver Citizen's Committee, "to get media attention you need to tell a good story with a human focus that is happening now." The more creative you are with your program or information, the better coverage and attention you will get. If possible, link newsworthy actions to other events including holidays, hot issues like American's with Disabilities Act debates, or government announcements such as Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) changes.

Don't be afraid to try something out of the ordinary—you'll grab attention.

noticed. Effective ways to get community attention are to work with the media, add momentum to fundraising drives, and to inform politicians about your needs.

Charles Dobson of the Vancouver Citizen's Committee and author of *The Citizen's Handbook: A Guide to Building Community in Vancouver*, suggests the following steps community organizations should take to get noticed.

—*Assemble a list of journalists and media professionals.* Paramount to getting noticed is finding journalists interested in what you are doing and

—*Look to radio and television journalists for free community spots or to advertise your agency.* Most radio stations have a commitment to the community and will offer free public service announcements for newsworthy information.

—*Clearly define your objective, then define your message.* Before you go to the media or speak in the community, have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish. Prepare an outline about why you want to get noticed and include specific information you want people to know about your transit agency. If you intend to air a

—*Issue news releases.* Send out news releases if you have new information to share with the public. For tips on writing an effective news release, see the sidebar on page 8.

—*Write a letter to the editor.* Writing a letter to the editor of a community newspaper is both an easy way to get publicity and to get your views across. Common Cause, the largest citizens' group in the United States, conducted a study that suggested a letter to the editor as one of the most effective ways to influence politicians.

—*Attend Local and State Meetings.* Get to know what other agencies in

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your community are doing as well as what the local governing body is working on. This can help your cause and help you get noticed. Attend neighborhood meetings, get involved in local coalitions, and attend city council meetings. Ask the coordinator of the meeting if you may speak for a few minutes about your agency, its needs, and what your agency can do for the community. Talk to people after the meeting to build support for your program.

—*Consider Alternative “Media.”*
Creative ways to get noticed in your

community can include printed t-shirts with your logo, window signs, bumper stickers, posters, notices in apartment buildings with your transit schedule and contacts, web sites, and newsletters. Don't be afraid to try something out of the ordinary—it's a great way to get attention. And that's the whole idea!

Source:
“Getting Noticed,” *The Citizen's Handbook*, www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook/, published by the Vancouver Citizen's Committee. ▲

Seven Hot Tips For Issuing a News Release

- *Look professional.* Issue the release on your agency's letterhead.
- *Get their attention.* Type “For immediate release” at the top of the release, with the date.
- *Keep their attention.* Create a strong newspaper style headline that will grab an editor's attention. For example, rather than writing “Community Transit Hosts Fund-Raising Fair,” use “\$100,000 to be Raised by Community Transit.”
- *First things first.* Include the most important information in the first sentence of your release.
- *Don't forget the basics.* In the rest of the release, cover the essentials of who, what, when, where, and why, and at the bottom of the release, put “For more information” with a contact name and number.
- *Keep it short.* Make sure to keep the release short, one to two pages, double-spaced, maximum.
- *Time it right.* For big events or information, send the release out seven days prior to the newsworthy event. Follow-up with a telephoned reminder two or three days before the event.

New Web Site Focuses on Coordination of Transit Services

The U. S Department of Transportation (DOT) and the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) are both interested in assisting with funding transportation services for persons who are somehow disadvantaged in their ability to obtain their own transportation. A web site has been developed to help facilitate the coordination of transportation funded by these two agencies to increase availability and quality of services.

Services are targeted to the elderly, persons with disabilities or with low or limited incomes, the young, and others without access to private automobiles. Many of these individuals need transportation to access the human service programs funded by DHHS.

The Coordinating Council's web site (www.ccamweb.org/) contains information about the Coordinating Council, its activities, and its members who could help with developing coordination strategies for your agency. You'll also be able to find publications on coordination and links to other sites of interest, discussion groups, and a bulletin board on which to post questions or comments.

The Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility, jointly staffed by DOT and HHS, was first established in 1986. The Council's goals include increasing the cost-effectiveness of resources used for specialized and human service transportation and increasing access to these services. ▲



Add a Healthy Touch To Your Drivers' Work Environment



Reducing repetitive stress injuries in transit drivers

by Pat Weaver

We hear the term “carpal tunnel” all the time and generally think of computer overuse or repetitive factory work. But carpal tunnel is just one illness in a set of syndromes called repetitive stress injury (RSI) that affect many kinds of workers. RSIs represent a significant health risk to U.S. workers and grew fivefold from 1984 to 1990.

RSI problems might be more prevalent for transit drivers than school bus drivers.

Those at risk of disability due to RSI includes bus drivers—when not enough attention is paid to a driver’s work environment. A 1999 study conducted by Weiss and Leonard for the National Educational Association found a high incidence of RSI in school bus drivers.

While research on the extent of the problem for transit drivers is not known, it is likely that problems experienced by school bus drivers are also prevalent among transit drivers. These problems might be even worse since transit drivers are likely to drive for longer time periods each day. Transit drivers may also spend much more time getting on and off the bus if it is lift-equipped or is transporting

passengers requiring assistance.

Drivers are often repeatedly opening and closing entrance doors, climbing and descending bus steps and helping passengers on and off the vehicle in cramped spaces. Drivers also must react quickly between the throttle and brake and repeatedly depress the clutch and/or brake pedals.

Identifying potential causes of RSI on transit vehicles and reducing injuries wherever possible is important to the driver, the passenger and the agency.

What is RSI and who gets it?

RSIs are a group of injuries that result from performing the same physical motion over and over again. Over time, the unvarying motion can cause temporary or permanent damage to cartilage, tendons, ligaments, nerves, and muscles involved in producing the motion. Almost any part of the body is susceptible to RSI, although arms and wrists, lower backs, and necks and shoulders are the most common. RSIs include illnesses such as carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, epicondylitis (tennis elbow), Raynaud’s syndrome, and chronic back strain. The symptoms of RSI include weakness of the injured area, trembling, and aches

and pains. If an RSI is developing, the symptoms will not disappear, even when the motion stops.

What conditions cause RSI?

There are three categories of risk, according to Weiss and Leonard.

First, the physical activities of bus driving are repetitive and require the driver to stay in the same position for long periods of time.

Second, personal or medical conditions such as diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, obesity, and smoking, among others may make a driver a more likely candidate for RSIs.

Finally, environmental or psycho-social factors associated with working at a stressful job or in a stressful environment can contribute to physical symptoms. Infrequent or inflexible breaks, perception of an intensified work load, or limited support from supervisors and coworkers are an example of some of the environmental factors that have been found to exacerbate RSIs.

What are other effects of RSI?

The Department of Labor reported in 1990 that cumulative trauma disorders (RSIs) account for 48 percent of all recordable workplace illnesses. More than 600,000 workers miss work time due to RSIs every year according to the AFL-CIO. The national cost of RSIs is \$11.5 billion annually according to the American Chiropractic Association. Those

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Healthy Touch,

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injured on the job may be eligible for medical treatment, financial compensation, job accommodation, and rehabilitation. This represents the potential for major cost to the employee, the employer and society at large.

The challenge for transit managers is to identify conditions in the workplace that have the potential for injury and to develop appropriate workplace engineering and ergonomic design. It is far cheaper and more humane to make small, necessary changes in the workplace than to pay medical expenses and pay for training new drivers to replace those who are severely injured.

How can drivers avoid RSI?

Avoiding RSI is a shared responsibility between employee and employer. As a driver, you must be proactive to protect your own health and well-being. Talk to your supervisor about developing a schedule for breaks from driving. Take time at the beginning of your shift and periodically through the day to do light stretching of your neck, arms, shoulders and back, and hamstrings. If you need help with developing a stretching

Managers can help their drivers stay healthy.

program, talk to your supervisor about providing training.

There are several posture-related corrections you might be able to make to reduce your risk. Sit up straight in your seat and adjust the lumbar support in your seat. If your seat is not adjustable, bring a lumbar support pillow to place behind your lower back. Avoid resting your wrists on the edge of your steering wheel for long

Education and Training Resources Help Implement Safety Program

There are a number of resources available to agencies in setting up an ergonomic safety program. The Live for Life program at Duke University provides a total body stretch routine that can be completed in five minutes. A copy of this stretching guide is available for order on page 15. You can learn more about Duke University's Live for Life Wellness Program at <http://www.hr.duke.edu/eohs/livelifelife/ergo.html>

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/homepage.html>.

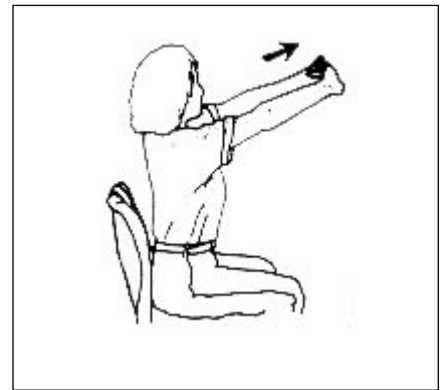
National Safety Council: <http://www.nsc.org>

periods of time. It's best to hold the wheel at the "9:00 and 3:00" positions to reduce the risk of RSIs.

Another step you can take is to adjust your seat or steering wheel so that your arms are not cramped or overextended. When grasping your steering wheel, avoid keeping your fingers tense. Keep a relaxed grip on the steering wheel, holding it with both hands.

How can managers help drivers avoid injury?

Drivers need the support of their managers in creating a healthy work environment. Weiss and Leonard offer several recommendations to that end. Some of these steps can be



Duke University's "1-2-3 Stretch" Program provides a log book with pictures and descriptions of easy stretches that can be done at work.

doors; however, there are still some vehicles in the Section 5310 and 5311 programs with manual door openers.

Second, specify quality air cushion seats in all new vehicles. Order seats that have lumbar support with adjustment for height and back angle. On existing buses that do not have built-in lumbar support, provide portable lumbar supports for the vehicles or encourage drivers to bring supports that fit them.

Mirror placement can also affect a driver's sitting position. Work with the vehicle manufacturers during

procurement to ensure that mirrors are placed in ways that minimize neck, shoulder, and upper back strain for your drivers.

Another way to help is to develop driving schedules with built-in breaks. Encourage drivers to include stretching as part of their pre-trip procedures and at mid-shift, or more frequently if they desire.

Provide training to drivers and other staff in how to work most healthfully in their buses or work stations. The training should include proper driving position, proper techniques for assisting passengers, and recommended stretching and other fitness recommendations. Place training posters in driver break areas with tips about avoiding RSIs.

Finally, take drivers seriously and take action when they report problems that may be RSI-related. Early intervention is one of the best ways to avoid a chronic, painful and expensive workplace injury.

Help for transit agencies

There are many excellent local and state resources to help you with planning and implementing ergonomic and safety training programs. One such source is your insurance company, particularly your workman's compensation carrier. Many of the larger companies offer comprehensive training services to help their insureds avoid injury and subsequent losses.

A second resource may be the occupational therapy or occupational health department at your local hospital. The department may be able to provide you with in-house training or other services related to occupational safety.

Finally, there are a number of web sites, printed materials and training packages to assist with developing a program. Some suggested resources are provided in the box on page 10.

It's time to make sure our drivers are safe

Consider the ergonomics of the driver compartment in the vehicle specifications. Make sure that the emphasis in your agency is on the health and well-being of both your passengers and your drivers. Train your drivers and reward them for safe operating practices. Passengers will be safer when the driver is comfortable, with good visibility. Valuable drivers may be able to avoid long-term, debilitating injury.

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Make Sure Power Wheelchairs are Properly Secured

Lawsuit highlights challenges for drivers.

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by Pat Weaver
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Securing non-motorized wheelchairs on buses can be a challenge to transit drivers in the tight spaces generally available on vehicles. Power wheelchairs present a special challenge due to the generally larger size of the chair, the inaccessibility of securement points on the rear of the chair and the additional weight of an electric chair with a battery.

Lawsuit filed

According to the *Transit Access Report* published May 25, 2000, a lawsuit has been filed against the Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) charging improper securement of power wheelchairs. Three

riders in Denver charged the agency with several instances of improperly securing a power wheelchair. No matter what the outcome in this specific lawsuit, the complaint emphasizes the need to be sure that drivers are thoroughly trained in the proper procedures for securing the passenger and the wheelchair. It also reinforces the importance of working with the disability community to identify acceptable solutions for chairs that are difficult to secure as a matter of safety and customer relations.

A list of some of the charges in the lawsuit help pinpoint problem areas for transit operators in general.

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Securing Wheelchairs,

continued from page 11

These charges include:

- Securing the wheelchair around the right wheel instead of the frame of the chair;
- Securing a strap to the foot pedals instead of the frame;
- Securing the strap on the bottom of one side of the chair instead of on the back bar where a “secure here” sticker had been placed;
- Securing a hook around the area where the battery charger plugs into the wheelchair; and
- Securing only one side of the wheelchair.

Cramped quarters

A Project ACTION-funded study found that in the mid-1990s there were approximately 80 manual and 20 powered wheelchair models on the market in the United States, and another three dozen scooter-type devices. Powered wheelchairs usually have rigid, non-foldable frames with batteries, motors, and controllers. The powered chair has four medium-sized wheels and all-drive components are located in the base of the wheelchair beneath the seat in an area where the straps of securement

back belts for wheelchair tie-down and lap and shoulder belts. The securement straps in both front and back should be attached to the frame of the chair, not to any removable part of the chair.



The battery at the back of power wheel chair presents an extra challenge to drivers in properly securing the wheel chair on their transit vehicle.

An improperly latched system is of no value, so be sure to review the securement manufacturer's instructions for specific questions or difficulties.

Where to get advice

If you encounter problems securing certain chairs, try contacting the manufacturer for advice. Some securement manufacturers produce

videos on the use of their products.

Both Kinedyne and Q'Straint, systems commonly used in Kansas, have videos available. In fact, Kansas Department of Transportation vehicle specifications require that a video be supplied with each new vehicle purchased. A copy of the Kinedyne video is in the Kansas RTAP lending library.

Talk with passengers

In addition to following the recommended procedures of the securement manufacturer, communicate with the passenger or passenger representative to determine a suitable method for securing chairs that do not fit the standard “footprint” of the wheelchair placement on the vehicle. Good communication is a key element of both safety and positive passenger relations.

Another idea for advice

Finally, a rider advisory committee or an advisory committee representing disability groups in your community may be useful in making recommendations to meet passenger needs and to resolve complaints or conflicts.

Training materials

A new national Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) training package is available on the topic of assisting passengers with disabilities, including lift and securement use. To obtain a loan copy of this video and workbook entitled *Trading Places: Assisting Passenger with Special Needs* or the Kinedyne securement video entitled *Safe and Secure*, please see 15 of this newsletter.

Sources

Transit Access Report, Pace Publications, May 25, 2000;

Trading Places: Assisting Passenger with Special Needs, Rural Technical Assistance Program, 1999;

Project ACTION. *Positioning and Securing Riders with Disabilities and Their Mobility Aids in Transit Vehicles: Designing an Evaluation Program*. ▲

An improperly latched system is of no value.

devices normally are attached.

The guidelines for a driver securing a power chair with four-point tie-downs such as Kinedyne or Q'Straint are the same as those for a non-motorized chair, except that there is more limited access.

A complete securement system includes floor and wall anchorage hardware, two front belts and two



Create a Successful Web Site

Many nonprofit organizations are overwhelmed by the task of creating an Internet presence and strategy. But forget about what is happening on the latest and greatest Web sites for a moment, and think about how you can embrace a basic plan that best integrates your present marketing and communication strategies. Here are 13 mandatory elements for a successful Web site from Todd Baker at Grizzard, a direct marketing agency.

1. *Design a Web site that loads within 10 seconds.* Today's Web visitor is increasingly less patient. Too many graphics, logo gyrations, charts and gimmicks slow down your site. Use low-resolution photos and pictures saved as .gif files, which are designed to minimize file transfer time over standard phone lines.

2. *Choose a color palette that is visually stimulating and warm.* Make sure the colors match your organization's mission and contribute to your branding. For example, if your transit vans are blue and yellow, incorporate these colors into your Web site.

3. *Use height and width tags with graphics.* This permits the text to appear before your graphics have finished loading. Remember . . . not everyone has high-speed Internet access.

4. *Black text on a white page is more readable.* The higher the percentage of color background tints, the more difficult the text is to read (just like direct mail). The viewer needs to be able to find his/her information

quickly and efficiently, so remember to use lots of white space—the more the better.

5. *Make your site navigation clear, easy to find, and place it in multiple positions: left, top, right, center, and bottom.* A site with easy to follow navigational devices will contribute to your site's success. Give your visitor no reason to say, "I'm lost!"

6. *Capture visitor comments.* Ask serious questions. Do surveys. Find out what your visitors/donors like or do not like about your site. Ask whether your riders are content with transit service areas, hours, and days. Where does your agency need improvement? Listen, learn and adjust your Web site to meet your visitor's needs.

7. *Create an electronic message board to help your visitors communicate with each other.* As you review their comments, you will learn volumes about their perception of your organization. For example, if your riders discuss dissatisfaction with some aspect of your agency's service, use that information to evaluate how well you are accommodating their needs.

8. *Use only a few of your most compelling photographs (with captions, of course).* On the Internet, as anywhere, a picture is worth a thousand words. For example, you might want to have a picture on your site that shows a clean bus, a helpful driver, and friendly riders.

9. *Give visitors the opportunity to subscribe to an e-newsletter from your president or executive director.*

Newsletters keep your riders informed about recent changes and upcoming events, such as; rides to the local fair or holidays when there is no transit service. It's especially helpful for communicating time-sensitive information. In addition, newsletters give riders an opportunity to forward specific articles and information to a friend.

10. *Use the power of the Internet to raise as much money as possible for your nonprofit through e-donations and e-cause marketing.* To see an example, visit GreaterGood.com.

11. *Create "swirl" marketing campaigns.* This is when you move your visitors back and forth from your Web site to and other media, such as radio, TV, magazines, and direct mail. For example, you may run a radio advertisement but drive the listener to your Web site for further information about your services.

12. *Create partnerships with other like-minded organizations.* What information does your organization produce that other Web sites might want to post on their sites? There is power in cooperation. For example, if your transit operates in the county, create a link with the county's Web site. Your riders can then stay informed about activities within the county that may be accessible using transit.

13. *Register your Web site with as many search engines as possible, such as Netscape, Yahoo, and Excite.* Make it as easy as possible for your audience to find you by using multiple key

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Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

Kansas RTAP Driver Training

October 5—Pittsburg
October 11—Salina
October 12—Great Bend
October 13—Hoxie

October 11, 2000

Kansas RTAP Manager Training Workshop in Salina, Ks.

Contact Rose Lichtenberg, Kansas University Transportation Center at 875/864-2594 or Rosemary@ukans.edu

October 31-Nov. 1, 2000

Federal Transit Administration's Substance Abuse Management Series in Atlanta, Ga.
Contact Carol-Ann Courtney, US Dept. of Transportation at 617/494-2686 or courtney@volpe.dot.gov

November 9-12, 2000

National Association of Counties Workforce Development Human Services Conference in San Bernardino, Ca.
Contact Jane Forsythe, National Association of Counties at 202/942-4288

November 10-12, 2000

World Congress and Exposition on Disabilities in Atlanta, Ga.
Contact 201/226-1446 or wcdinfo@wcdexpo.com. www.wcdexpo.com

November 12-15, 2000

14th TRB National Rural/Intercity Conference. Lake Tahoe, Nevada. Contact Peter Shaw at (202) 334-2934.

May 20-25, 2001

Community Transportation Association of America's Annual Rodeo and Expo in Salt Lake City, Utah
Contact Charles Dickson, CTAA, at 202/661-0208 www.ctaa.org/expo

Editor's Note: To include meetings or workshops in our calendar section, please send information to Kansas Trans Reporter, KUTC, 2011 Learned Hall, Lawrence, KS 66045

Successful Web Site, from page 10

words, such as; transit, rural transit, paratransit, Kansas transit, and transportation.

Now that you have an idea of what it takes to design and build a successful Web site, you must consider the costs. Who designs and builds the site (yourself or a professional) and the complexity of your site will determine the overall cost.

There are many software packages to choose from if you decide to build your own Web site. Internet Explorer's FrontPage Express and Netscape's Composer both offer free programs that help nonprofessionals build web sites. You may also purchase software that ranges from \$9.95 for "Go Daddy's" standard edition, up to \$495 for "Divine Solutions" Web site creation software.

Usually the more expensive software programs provide more key features. "Hit counters," that keep track of how many visitors you've had, ani-

mations, templates, and online processing of credit card purchases are a few examples of key features. These extras make your site more pleasing to view, easier to use, and more professional looking.

Contracting for professional web site design is obviously more expensive than designing and building the site yourself. The price depends on the site's design complexity and the experience level of the company. Iris Web Creations of San Francisco charges \$295 to design and build one text home page, and each additional linked page is \$200.

Regardless of who creates your Web site, there are monthly and yearly service fees that you must pay to keep your site running. The host fee ranges between \$10 and \$30 a month. A domain name, such as www.eFuse.com, will cost an initial \$70, then \$35 annually. (A domain name makes your site easier to find and looks more professional.)

Besides these regular service fees, you must also think about maintenance costs. Even after your

site is built and on-line, you have to continue to perfect it and keep it updated.

Having a Web site for your organization is a great way to advertise 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your transit agency. It can, and should be, continuously updated so that it has current, reliable information that is easily accessible. The cost of designing, building, and maintaining your Web site is minimal when compared to the benefits your transit agency will reap. ▲

Note:

This article was adapted from an article by Grizzard, a full service advertising agency, assisting non-profit organizations nationwide in creative Web site development, direct mail strategy and execution. For more information on creative Internet fundraising opportunities for your nonprofit, call Todd Baker at 800/325-4892. Or visit their web site at www.grizzard.com

Resources Order Form

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

Publications

- Total Body Stretch.** Duke University's Life for Life Program, 2000.
- Medicaid Transit Passes: A Winning Solution for All.** Ecosometrics Incorporated and the American Public Works Association, 2000.
- Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates.** Federal Transit Administration, Summer 2000.

Videotapes

- Safe & Secure.** Kinedyne of Lawrence, 1995. This videotape provides training and a demonstration of Kinedyne's mobility aid securement and occupant restraint systems for vehicles. It shows how to secure an occupied wheelchair in a van using Kinedyne's equipment.
- Trading Places: Assisting Passengers with Special Needs.** Rural Technical Assistance Program, 1999. This videotape provides information on proper wheelchair securement. A workbook is included.

Where to Send Order Form

Fax your completed order form to 785/864-3199 or send it by mail to:
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Please send us the inside form with corrected address information, or fax your changes to 785/864-3199.

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

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

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