



Kansas Trans Reporter

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Volunteer drivers and liability

What coverage do you need in Kansas?

by Tom Worker-Braddock & Christy Lane

Volunteers are valuable resources for transportation organizations that need drivers and have limited budgets. Some volunteers drive the agency's vehicles, while others drive their own vehicles. In the latter case, volunteers may absorb the vehicle operating costs of



insurance, fuel and maintenance, or they may be reimbursed by the transit agency for the cost of operating the vehicle while performing their volunteer duties. Regardless of whose vehicle a volunteer drives, organizations are often reluctant to use volunteers due to liability concerns and confusion about what kind of insurance coverage may be needed.

Across the United States, there is lack of consistency in federal and state volunteer protection laws as

Go to page 2

What's new with coordinated plans in Kansas

by Tom Worker-Braddock & Christy Lane

In previous newsletters, we at the KU Transportation Center provided information to help Coordinated Transit Districts (CTDs) in Kansas create their Coordinated Human Service Public Transit Plans. The KUTC also participated in a pilot project, part of the United We Ride Initiative, to directly assist two CTDs—CTDs 3 and 12—with creating their coordinated plans. This article will describe what has been accomplished since then.

Go to page 3

Inside:

 <p>Volunteer drivers and liability, continued Page 2</p> <p>What's new with coordinated plans, continued Page 3</p>	 <p>Tools for staying on top of drug testing paperwork Page 4</p> <p>Seven ways to be collaborative Page 5</p>	 <p>New FTA rule on emergency procedures Page 6</p> <p>Getting "down and dirty" Page 7</p> <p>Good ideas for customer service Page 9</p>	 <p>Evacuating vulnerable populations Page 10</p> <p>Beyond Web site basics Page 12</p> 	 <p>Calendar Page 14</p> <p>Resources Page 15</p> 
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Volunteer driver liability,

continued from page 1

they apply to volunteer drivers. For example, while the Federal Volunteer Protection Act grants volunteers immunity from civil liability for harm caused by an act or omission of the volunteer who acts on behalf of the organization, immunity does not apply when the harm occurs when the volunteer operates a vehicle. State volunteer protection laws are just as confusing.

To assist states and nonprofit organizations in understanding this issue, the American Association of Retired Persons and the National Conference of State Legislatures published a national survey of laws related to insurance and liability for volunteer drivers, in December 2006. However, while the report provides a review of each state's laws, it does not provide a comprehensive analysis of insurance practices.

KS volunteer immunity laws

Like other states, Kansas has a statute that addresses immunity from liability for volunteers of certain nonprofit organizations and limitations. K. S. A. 60-3601 provides volunteers with protection from liability unless they acted with malicious intent. Damages to injured parties are limited to the amount of the nonprofit's or the volunteer's general liability insurance.

Volunteer drivers of agency vehicles

At this time in Kansas, there are no commercial general liability (CGL) policies that provide coverage for

auto-related claims. The policies specifically exclude such coverage. According to Scott Smith of the Kansas Insurance Department, an agency that uses volunteers to drive the organization's vehicles must add those volunteers as covered drivers under its Business Auto Policy (BAP). Daryl Richards, also of the Kansas Insurance Department, added that insurance companies will not provide additional protection without receiving a proper premium fee for increased exposure to a potential bodily injuries and/or property damage liability claims.

Volunteers who drive their own vehicles

If the volunteer drives his or her own motor vehicle, he or she is required by Kansas law to obtain auto liability insurance for the vehicle. Some personal auto policies provide coverage for claims arising out of the use of the insured vehicle during the performance of volunteer work, and some do not. Coverage depends on the language of the specific policy. "If coverage is not provided," Scott Smith said, "the owner is required to obtain a business auto policy (BAP) to provide the coverage."

Are insurance companies required to cover volunteer driver activities?

Some states, including California and Maine, require insurance companies to extend coverage for volunteer driver activities. While Kansas does not require companies to extend coverage

at this time, there is an amendment being considered to Kansas Administrative Regulation 40-3-51. This amendment would protect volunteers who drive patients to and from medical appointments from adverse actions including cancellation, non-renewal, and higher premiums.

Scott Smith of the Kansas Insurance Department added some caution: "the amendment also allows the insurer to increase the premium if the vehicle's mileage increases because it places the volunteer driver into a higher rating classification."

Bottom line

While volunteer recruitment, training, and supervision require time and attention, volunteer drivers provide valuable services, and often without receiving any compensation or reim-

In Kansas, an organization whose vehicles are driven by volunteers must add them as covered drivers under its Business Auto Policy.

bursment for their costs. If an organization wants to use volunteers to drive its vehicles, the organization should contact its insurance agent to make sure the activity is properly insured. When the agency uses volunteers who drive their own vehicles, it should advise volunteers to contact their insurance agents to make sure they have proper coverage.

For questions, contact your insurance agent or Scott Smith at the Kansas Insurance Department, (785) 296-3071.

Resource:

Sundeen, Matt and Nicholas Farber. *Volunteer Driver Liability and Immunity*. National Council of State Legislatures, December 2006. ▲

Here is the link to state volunteer driver liability laws mentioned here: <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/transportation/SVDLLaws.htm#KS>

K. S. A. 60-3601 can be found at: <http://www.kslegislature.org/legsrv-statutes/index.do>. Enter 60-3601 as the statute number, and click on "get statute" for the full text.

Coordinated planning update,
continued from page 1

After the pilot, the KUTC and the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) Public

- 2) to increase funding, including creating partnerships with businesses and medical centers that benefited from transit services;
- 3) to create and use a centralized dispatch as a way to increase services with existing vehicles; and

When the draft plans were completed, the KUTC sent each CTD chairperson a draft plan for the area and requested that the plans be distributed to CTD members for comment. The KUTC worked with the CTDs to revise the plans accordingly.

For more information about the coordination plans, visit **Kansas United We Ride** at: <http://www.ksunitedweride.org>. Click on “CTD Coordinated Plans” at the top of the page.

Also contact your KDOT CTD advisor for more information:
 CTDs 2, 4, 5, 9, 10, 13: Stacey Cowen, StaceyC@ksdot.org, (785) 296-5284
 CTDs 6, 7, 8, 11, 14: Bret Rowe, bret@ksdot.org, (785) 296-4907
 CTD 15: Cheryl Fisher, CherylFi@ksdot.org, (785) 368-7091

The final drafts of the plans were sent to KDOT on July 31, 2007, for review and comment. KDOT is now in the process of reviewing these plans to meet the requirements of agency contracts with KDOT. The intent of the plans is to not only meet the requirements for coordinated planning in

Transportation Unit provided support to the remaining 12 CTDs as they held transportation summits and created their coordinated plans.* KUTC prepared summit documents and presentation material, while KDOT facilitated planning summits earlier this year, during April and May.

- 4) to increase public education and marketing—and to emphasize that transit services are available to the general public, and not just to disabled and elderly individuals.

SAFETEA-LU, but to use these plans on an ongoing basis to develop and revise service in each CTD. ▲

Once the transportation summits were completed, KDOT summarized the following information and sent it to the KUTC:

- Stakeholders’ contact information, including those invited and those who attended the summit;
- Feedback from workgroups on “What can we do better?;” and
- Draft goals and objectives for the plans.

The KUTC used the information received from KDOT to draft individualized plans for the remaining 12 CTDs.

Several CTDs had common themes in their coordination plans’ objectives. The most common were:

- 1) to increase service areas and frequencies, while cutting back on duplicated services;

Gather your team now to apply for the 2008 MPS Institute

While next spring seems far away, 2008 team applications are due December 21, 2007.

Do you wish your collaborative efforts were more effective in meeting the transportation needs of people with disabilities? The 2008 Mobility Planning Services Institute can provide the tools you need if your community is ready to:

- create and maintain strong and equal linkages between the disability community and the transportation industry;
- commit at the highest levels of your organizations to work on transportation solutions; and
- learn answers and ideas from colleagues working in communities like yours.



Gather some of the key players in your community who represent disability and transportation organizations and bring them to Easter Seals Project ACTION’s Mobility

Go to next page

* Except for the plan for CTD 1, in the Kansas City area—arranged by the Mid-America Regional Council.

File folders for drug testing

by Jacob Bustad

For many transit agencies, keeping accurate records of drug and alcohol testing results is a constant challenge—made even more difficult when considering the various drug test forms that accompany these tests.

Cheryl Fisher, Drug and Alcohol Program Manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation, explained that a common complaint from agencies around the state is the volume of necessary paperwork. This can lead to unorganized and poorly maintained files. Fisher is now distributing a checklist to agencies in order to combat this problem and make recordkeeping easier and more efficient. To obtain a copy of this checklist, access www.kutc.ku.edu or email Fisher at cherylfi@ksdot.org.

Other state agencies have produced different recordkeeping systems. A product developed by the

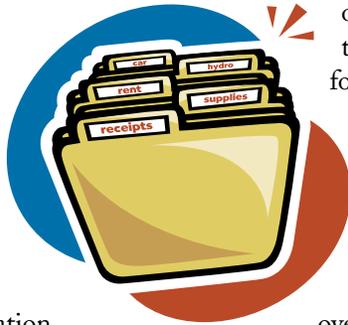
West Virginia Department of Transportation (WVDOT) Division of Public Interest provides a solution that can benefit any agency.

The WVDOT developed printed manila folders and related forms to help rural transit operators categorize the various drug test forms and results.

The 14 folders allow the agency to organize forms and test results as well as employee training and vendor oversight records.

The folders and forms are available on CD and can be used by any transit operator, regardless of location (rural or urban) and size—see page 15 for a free copy. A low cost way to produce the folders is to give the folder-files to a copy center to print onto self-adhesive material to affix to plain folders. The forms that go inside the folders can be printed on a regular office printer.

WVDOT was given the 2006 Outstanding Achievement Award by RTAP for this effort.



Source: Walters, Emily. "RTAP Announces 2006 Award Winners." *Community Transportation*, Fall 2006, Vol. 24:7. ▲

Apply for MPS Institute,

continued from page 3

Planning Services Institute taking place April 21-24, 2008 in Washington, D.C. While next spring seems far away at this point, please note that team applications are due December 21, 2007.

Twenty teams will be selected from across the U.S. They will travel to Washington, D.C., to convene at the Renaissance Washington Hotel to share information and strategies to improve access to transportation services in their communities. Teams are composed of three to five leaders from the disability world and transportation industry in their communities. You are encouraged to begin assembling your team right away, referring to the application guidelines related to team membership, and give thoughtful consideration to the questions that are asked.

There is no registration fee for MPS, and ESPA will reimburse participants for hotel accommodations, ground and air transportation, and meals not included during scheduled activities.

Examples of how past participants have taken action on the plans developed at MPS were featured the December 2006 and August 2007 issues of the *Project ACTION Update* newsletter which can be found at <http://www.projectaction.org> — click on "Free Resources."

Details about the MPS Institute, including the application form and instructions, are on ESPA's Web site, <http://www.projectaction.org/MPS>. ▲

Another helpful tool: Post-accident threshold cards

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has created a quick reference guide with information on FTA post-accident thresholds, who should be tested, and limitations for testing. The guide is provided as a 3.5 in. by 2.25 in. laminated card. The card can be attached to a lanyard for easy use by transit employer representatives who have the responsibility to make post-accident determinations compliant with 49 CFR Parts 655.4 and 655.44.

The cards can be ordered on-line at the Publications section of FTA's Office of Safety and Security Web site at <http://transitsafety.volpe.dot.gov/Publications/order/singledoc.asp?docid=440> — at no cost. Use the comments box to indicate the number of cards you would like to receive.



Seven ways to be collaborative

by Kelly Heavey

According to a 2005 KDOT statistics report, there are 188 transit providers in Kansas serving 96 counties in public transportation. That adds up to a lot of potential collaboration, if organizations are willing.

“7 Ways to be Collaborative,” an article printed in *Federal Computer Week’s* April 2007 issue, lists seven desired characteristics to create positive change in government program management by working with other organizations. How can your transit agency take on those characteristics? We’ll discuss ideas below.

An organization that is best poised for collaboration:

1 Values and embraces networks. Many networks support Kansas transit agencies. Your program consultant at the Kansas Department of Transportation is your first step to tapping into those networks, particularly in the areas of funding, grants management or regulations. Another excellent network is your coordinated transit district (CTD), which represents particular counties in the state and provides a forum for administering state and federal funds and for coordination of service. The Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council (KCTDC) represents all of the CTDs and helps make decisions on vehicle specifications, project prioritization and other essential activities of Kansas transit.

The Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (KS RTAP) at <http://www.ksrtap.ukans.edu> — and



An organization that is best poised for collaboration:

1. Values and embraces networks
2. Understands the big picture
3. Understands how to lead from the side
4. Knows how to sell
5. Is inclusive
6. Mitigates the stovepipes
7. Values independent program management

the Kansas Public Transit Association (KPTA) at www.kstransit.com provide training, technical assistance and, in the case of the latter, legislative representation in Topeka and Washington D.C. Sign up to be on a mailing list or attend training or a conference to get everything you can out of these resources.

Another program you and your agency may choose to become involved with is Kansas United We Ride (ksunitedweride.org). This is part of a national effort to create coordination plans to serve individuals with disabilities, older adults or individuals with lower incomes. Agencies develop an action plan and a timeline to accomplish goals. Becoming familiar with this effort

connects you with state offices in other fields, such as the Kansas Department of Aging the Kansas Department of Commerce, the Department of Social Rehabilitation Service, and more.

2 Understands the big picture. Your transit agency is more than a web of bus routes. It is a business with goals, strategies and a mission. When communicating with customers and other agencies, a professional business approach is key to managing your organization.

KDOT’s mission statement is: “To provide a statewide transportation system to meet the needs of Kansas.” What is your agency’s mission?

3 Understands how to lead from the side. Leave your “top-down” management assumptions at the door and allow co-workers to operate using their own professional judgment (within reason). People may surprise you with what they can do.

4 Knows how to sell. “Sell” is defined here as, “vision, approach, strategic alignment, strategic value, interim progress, incremental outcomes and program successes,” through program messages. Become your agency’s public relations director if it doesn’t already have one. Get

Go to next page

Seven ways to collaborate,
continued from page 5

the word out about transit programs and achievements with advertisements, press releases, or any other way you can think of. Creativity catches attention!

5 Is inclusive. Inclusiveness requires a conscious effort to invite others into your agency’s activities. Instead of working as an independent organization, perhaps in competition with others, ask them instead to join you in co-sponsoring award recognition celebrations or other events. The recent transportation coordination summits in Kansas are good examples of inclusiveness—inviting others to identify common issues and solutions. This could also include organizations not directly involved in transportation but complementary to it, such as state departments with similar clientele or local organizations with needs for transportation.

6 Mitigates the stovepipes. Kansas transit agencies are accustomed to operating with multiple funding sources and multiple federal, state, local, and private regulations and guidelines. When those funding sources aren’t integrated and force you to operate your system in a less efficient manner, it’s referred to as “stovepiping” or “silos.” Operating a “senior” bus and a “mental health bus” and a “Medicaid” bus is often the result of stovepiped funding. Work within your communities and with your funding sources to develop operation plans that provide the greatest number of rides for the lowest cost, still meet the requirements of your funding source.

7 Values independent program management. It is important for a

board of directors or executive members of a company to steer clear of close micromanagement. Put trust in your program managers to accomplish their jobs in their own way. This will create a respectful working relationship by allowing them the freedom to do their jobs without being under a microscope.

Collaborating with other agencies and organizations can only improve your own. Share ideas, achievements, events and more. Having another name tied to your agency may even interest people you don’t normally

reach—and improve ridership.

To read “7 ways to be collaborative,” visit <http://www.fcw.com/article98084-04-02-07-Print> — and start brainstorming!

Sources:

Kansas Department of Transportation Selected Statistics
<http://www.ksdot.org/divplanning/selstat/default.asp>

“7 Ways to be Collaborative” by Emory Miller. *Federal Computer Week*. April 2, 2007. <http://www.fcw.com/article98084-04-02-07-Print> ▲

New rulemaking from FTA on emergency procedures for public transportation systems

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by Jacob Bustad
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A new FTA rule aimed at further improving planning for emergency situations was recently passed, creating a new subpart in 601 of Title 49 in the Code of Federal Regulations. The rule, effective February 8, 2007, establishes emergency relief from compliance with certain Federal transit policy statements, circulars, guidance documents, and regulations in times of national or regional emergencies.

The Final Rule was the result of an original proposal by FTA to establish an “Emergency Relief Docket” for granting this relief, which essentially allows grantees and subgrantees in the Federal transit system to perform necessary emergency actions, regardless of prior guidance or regulation. FTA’s pro-

posal came in the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, during which the FTA received numerous requests from transit agencies to deviate from federal regulations both in the immediate disaster zone as well as in areas receiving evacuees.

The proposal was subject to a comment period, and 14 comments were posted. FTA then clarified the rule and emphasized that the rule is “to provide relief in the aftermath of regional or national emergencies, not during imminent life-threatening situations.” This acknowledges that when emergency situations are imminent or underway, agencies do not have time to complete docket paperwork. In these cases, transit agencies would simply work with local authorities to evacuate people as quickly as possible, consistent with local emergency plans. [For more information on emergency evacuation, see page 10.]

Go to page 11

Getting on top of maintenance requires getting “down and dirty”

by Jacob Bustad

Any vehicle needs regular maintenance to keep running, from a dirtbike to an eighteen-wheel tractor-trailer. And every vehicle owner knows that preventive maintenance, where the goal is to monitor and prevent failure in equipment before it occurs, is the best possible way to actually “maintain” the vehicle.

Transit drivers are just as responsible for the vehicles they drive. Every transit agency receiving federal funding is responsible for maintaining property in good operating order in compliance with FTA guidelines. KDOT personnel annually inspect equipment purchased with funds from or used in the operation of Section 5310 and 5311 programs. Annual reports from these inspections are part of a permanent file—a file that is reviewed by KDOT when making future funding decisions for subrecipients.

This article will describe the different steps involved in a preventive maintenance plan, and what you can do to ensure the proper maintenance of both a vehicle and the wheelchair lift or other related equipment.

Pre- and post-trip inspections

A simple daily inspection can enable the driver to spot potential problems and prevent roadside breakdowns. The following list (from the KDOT’s *Public Transportation Pre-Trip Inspection Checklist*) is a basic outline of procedures for spotting and reporting potential problems before driving the vehicle each day:

Walk around

- **Tires**—check the tread depth, pressure, and overall condition. No punctures, cracks, tread separations; adequate tread depth prescribed by tire manufacturer.
- **Windows & Mirrors**—Verify windows and mirrors are not cracked or broken.
- **Lights & Reflectors**—Turn on headlights and four-way flashers. Make sure that all lamps illuminate. Check the high and low beams on the headlights. Check to see that reflectors are in good condition.
- **Leaks**—Look for water, oil, gas, transmission, or other fluid leaks under the vehicle. If a leak is detected, report it immediately.

Interior

- **Seatbelts/Safety Restraints**—Check that all are available, functioning, and in good condition (no fraying or other wear).
- **Cleanliness/Items Secured**—Check for cleanliness, all items secured (e.g. assistive devices, scrapers, spray cleaners, etc.)
- **Radio/Communication Equipment**—In good working order.
- **Emergency Equipment**—Check fire extinguisher (on board, fully charged, secured), web cutter, first aid and bloodborne pathogen kit, triangle warning kit, and drag blanket (if applicable).
- **Emergency Door, Roof Hatch, Windows**—Check that all are accessible and in good working order.
- **Wheelchair Lift (if available)**—Cycle the lift. Pay special attention to the wheelchair securement system and how it operates. Double check safety barriers and make sure the lift runs smoothly.



Under hood

- **Oil**—Verify the oil level is between add and full. Fill, if low.
- **Radiator Level**—Check to make sure that the coolant overflow tank is filled to the appropriate level.
- **Windshield Washer Fluid Level**—Check to make sure it is full.
- **Power Steering Fluid**—Check to make sure it is filled to the appropriate level.
- **Brake Fluid**—Check to make sure that the master cylinder is filled to the appropriate level.
- **Transmission Fluid**—Check to make sure it is filled to the appropriate level.
- **Battery**—Check the fluid level of battery (if not maintenance free). Make sure cable connectors are tight and clean of any corrosion.
- **Belts**—Verify that belts are not cracked or worn.
- **Hoses**—Look for leaks. If a leak is detected, report it to maintenance immediately. Make sure hoses are not spongy, brittle or cracked.

KDOT requires agencies to perform these pre-trip inspections every day on all transit vehicles, using KDOT’s checklist form. Checklists must be retained for 90 days.

KDOT also requires a post-trip inspection, using another form, for vehicles that fall under Kansas

Go to next page

Getting “down and dirty,”

continued from page 7

Corporation Commission (KCC) regulations. Unlike the pre-trip inspections, these post-trip checklists are not inspected in the yearly maintenance audits but are inspected in every-other-year program audits KDOT performs. KDOT will check to see if your agency has checklists retained for the previous 90 days. KDOT provides each agency a copy of the vehicle audit form before they arrive at the agency for the audit. That way the agency will know what will be inspected. According to KDOT Transit Program Consultant Bret Rowe, this form is typically revised from year to year.

Other regular inspections

While daily inspections are the best way to implement preventive maintenance, other scheduled maintenance is still required. Any preventive maintenance schedule should have activities scheduled on a daily, weekly, and annual basis, as well as activities to be conducted based on mileage of the vehicle. One easy example is an oil change. The vehicle’s owner’s manual indicates how often the oil should be changed. KDOT reimburses agencies for oil changes. Agencies need to keep invoices for oil changes and submit them to KDOT for reimbursement.

When a vehicle is in for scheduled work, inspections of specific vehicle components should be done. These inspections usually have checklists that are created for each vehicle type, and have different procedures for different vehicles.

Regular inspections should be well-documented in order to develop a comprehensive maintenance record for each vehicle. This should include details for each time maintenance is required, such as whether it was pre-

ventive or unscheduled, and if a road call was required. Other notation should include mileage, description of repair, dates in/out of shop, cost, and names of the personnel that worked on the vehicle.

All of this information can be crucial when understanding how to develop the best maintenance for each vehicle. KDOT provides agencies with an equipment manual—a (white) booklet—to track routine maintenance on a vehicle, such as when the battery was changed, when new tires were added, etc. KDOT requires

be taken out of service before the next service day, and must be repaired before it returns, unless there is no other vehicle available to replace it. If the failure occurs in-service, the vehicle may finish the remainder of that service day. In the case that a vehicle is not available to replace one with a faulty lift, the provider can keep that vehicle in service for no more than five days (if population served is 50,000 or less) or three days (if population served is 50,000 or more).

Pre-trip inspections are part of the maintenance schedule for wheel-

Every transit agency in Kansas should have these two checklists. They are available from BretRowe at bret@ksdot.org

—KDOT Public Transportation Pre-Trip Inspection Checklist

—KCC/FMCSA Post-Trip Inspection Checklist

agencies to maintain these records for the life of the vehicle. Rowe said that while the booklets are not required to be transferred to a new owner if the vehicle is sold, it’s a good idea, because that information would be very useful for the next owner.

Maintaining lifts and other accessibility features

Aside from maintaining a vehicle’s road performance, transit drivers are also responsible for bus equipment being in compliance with ADA accessibility requirements. This means that vehicles must be readily accessible to individuals with disabilities. This is a component of the KDOT annual inspection, and another factor in future funding decisions.

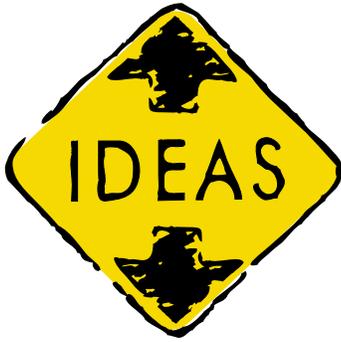
There are several ADA requirements for wheelchair lifts. First, a schedule of regular maintenance should be developed. Any failure to operate properly should be reported by the driver to the agency immediately. When a lift does fail, it should

chair lifts. A visual inspection of the lift should check hoses, wires, chains and bolts for wear, damage and misalignment. Also, the lift should be run through a complete cycle to ensure operation, and the power source should be checked. A daily maintenance checklist should be developed for each lift to ensure appropriate maintenance.

Transit drivers depend on their vehicles to allow them to do their job as well as possible, and transit passengers depend on these vehicles to increase their freedom. By implementing the proper preventive maintenance plan, both drivers and passengers can expect a better and safer ride, every time.

Source:

Chapter 7 of the *Kansas Rural Transit Provider Handbook*, published by the Kansas University Transportation Center, 2000. <http://www.kutcc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/kutcc/home/resources.php?page=rtap> ▲



You don't need to search high and low to find good customer service ideas

by Kelly Heavey

“The customer is always right.” The saying isn’t just for retail or food service—it’s for any kind of service, including public transportation. The goal of making riders as comfortable as possible should be right behind ensuring their safety.

Customer service doesn’t have to be complicated and you don’t have to search long to find good ideas. A report by the Beverly Foundation (referenced at the end of this article) identifies everyday solutions used by innovative rural systems, such as responsive service times, accurate scheduling, pick-up location flexibility, courteous drivers and comfortable vehicles as just a few of the strategies that can contribute to good customer service. Another source for good ideas is the November 2006 issue of *CASTA Connection* at www.colorado-transit.com. Tom Smith’s article, “A Call to Improve Customer Service,” looks at what some transit agencies across the country are doing for their customers. Here are a few examples.

The Fort Worth Transportation Authority created a customer service improvement implementation plan earlier this year for its transit system, The T, as a result of a self-study on service that produced 72 different suggestions. The suggestions includ-

ed improving employee training, providing new employees with extensive orientation and creating a better evaluation system.

The T also installed a new IP telephony system by the international customer service and IP telephony solutions provider, ShoreTel, in February 2006. In addition to basic call line capabilities, this new system has reporting features, after hours service and a “hunt groups” feature—the ability to direct calls to any available or backup operator if the requested line is unavailable.

This improvement has “helped us increase productivity throughout the entire organization because people are more efficient handling phone calls,” Bobbie Morton, IT director of The T, said in a statement.

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority changed the title and duties of their customer service representatives to service planners, who now meet with community groups to get more direct feedback about programs. As a result of input from these groups, the agency was able to avoid service cuts through improvements in service design. Smaller vehicles were also ordered to meet specific identified needs.

A CEO of Orange County, California, thought that some of the wording in an employee manual, about the right of workers to refuse service to a “toxic passenger,” was not conducive to good customer service. Because of this, the employee manual will be revised.

A comprehensive employee training program is a key component

of a good quality assurance program. How you convey information to your employees will determine how well equipped they are to effectively communicate with riders, according to *Operating the Rural Transit Agency*, a technical assistance brief developed by the National Rural Transit Assistance Program.

Some customer service improvements can be adapted to your rural transit agency from larger transportation systems. In *Best Foot Forward: Training Front Line Personnel to Provide Customer Quality Service*, published by the Permanent Citizens Advisory Committee to New York’s Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in 2003, the importance of optimal employee training to customer service is discussed. For example, 31 agencies across the country, including New York City Transit’s Department of Buses, adopted a Bus Operator Selection System (BOSS) developed by the American Public Transit Association (APTA), which

Small improvements can yield big results. Learn from other agencies.

has curbed bus accidents and developed a more knowledgeable and qualified team of bus drivers to serve public transportation customers.

One model of a BOSS, implemented in Winnipeg, Canada, consists of five steps for five areas. An applicant cannot progress to the next step without successfully completing

Go to page 13

In the game of “What if?,” are you ready?

Planning evacuation for vulnerable populations

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by Jacob Bustad
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The 9/11 terrorist attacks and more recently the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina may have occurred far from Kansas, but the need for proper emergency preparedness in all states was made clear by these events. Included in this emergency preparedness is the need for evacuation planning, a lack of which can lead to tragic consequences like those in the Gulf Coast. It is important to remember that while most of the population may be able to evacuate on their own terms, the vulnerable populations of that same area— including the elderly, the disabled, those with limited English proficiency, and other populations that are considered transportation-service dependent— require strategies for evacuation by the transit services involved.

Both KDOT and the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (KRTAP) are providing assistance to the rural transit providers that would likely be part of a team of responders to transport vulnerable populations in case of an emergency. The purpose of the technical support is to strengthen and develop the partnerships between local emergency planning committees and local transit agencies.

While the likelihood of a hurricane affecting Kansas is practically nonexistent, many other emergencies need to be considered when developing preparedness plans for a given

area. The U.S. Department of Transportation lists 11 possible emergency categories, including biological, chemical, nuclear and terrorist attacks, as well as natural disasters ranging from earthquake and flood-



ing to tornadoes and winter storms. Although the specific challenges involved in each of these scenarios might change, the efforts needed to locate and transport vulnerable populations are always essential.

Vulnerable populations

Vulnerable populations contain individuals who require specific considerations in emergency transportation planning, including some older adults, people with physical, hearing, visual, psychiatric, intellectual, learning and cognitive disabilities, people with limited English proficiency, and persons of low incomes. These populations are expected to continue to rise, especially the older population. A U.S. DOT strategy paper esti-

mates that by 2030 the population of persons 65 and older will double— this only makes the issue more important. The lack of English proficiency is noted because of a high correlation between this population and the use of community and public transportation. Language barriers can be a critical problem for these individuals, because it can keep them from gaining information during an emergency and they may not have access to private transportation in an emergency.

The first step in evacuation planning, then, is to identify people needing transportation assistance, made easier through a well-developed partnership network in the community. The agencies and organizations involved, from transportation providers to health and human services and even local faith-based organizations, can work together to both locate these populations and establish what transportation resources would be needed.

Disabled and senior citizens

One aspect of evacuation planning that emerged from Katrina was the need for special consideration of the challenge involved when moving people from hospital, nursing home and other medical facilities. A recent federal GAO report detailed the efforts made for these populations during Hurricane Charley in Florida and Katrina in Mississippi, and concluded that the basic decision of whether or not to evacuate a facility is just one of many challenges. Although state and local governments can order evacuations, health

care facilities are sometimes exempt from these orders. This again highlights the need for cooperation between all groups involved in emergency planning; many of the officials interviewed stressed the lack of transportation resources because local demand for transportation in an emergency would likely exceed supply. Also, the transportation resources available may not be able to properly serve members of these populations, who have specific mobility needs. Finally, these populations present a unique challenge in

Your agency may be able to handle day to day transportation for citizens with disabilities and limited mobility, but what if they need to be transported all at once?

that the evacuation-receiving facility would need to be able to accommodate potential residents for a long period of time.

The above challenges highlight the need for comprehensive planning that considers every angle, eliminating as many potential problems as possible. It's often said that in emergencies, the most dangerous element is what you don't know.

Resources

Several resources are available for anyone involved in emergency preparedness and evacuation planning. The U.S. DOT Web site offers a page with information about emergency planning and the disabled, at www.dotcr.ost.dot.gov/asp/emergencyprep.asp, that also provides direct links to the strategy paper and checklist recently released by the DOT. The checklist outlines steps to effectively prepare for an emergency, and separates these steps between those taken during planning, when an emergency is immi-

nent, during the emergency, and during recovery operations. This last phase of recovery is another good example for receiving the potential benefits of emergency planning, as transportation resources could be situated where they could assist in recovery efforts.

To find out more about these efforts in Kansas, the United We Ride's Kansas Web site, www.ksunit-edweride.org, provides information and contacts. One of the current goals of United We Ride is to establish five regional sites as pilots for evacuation coordination planning, and then to develop a one-day training module that will be based on haz-

ard and security planning training packages. The goal through this type of training is the cooperation of all agencies and organizations involved, which means proper evacuation planning can be achieved and the dangers of the unknown avoided.

Sources:

Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities.

www.dotcr.ost.dot.gov/asp/emergencyprep.asp

Strategies In Emergency Preparedness for Transportation-Dependent Populations. National Consortium on the Coordination of Human Services Transportation, <http://www.dotcr.ost.dot.gov/Documents/Emergency/Emergency%20Preparedness%20Strategy%20Paper.doc>

Preliminary Observations on the Evacuation of Vulnerable Populations due to Hurricanes and Other Disasters. US Government Accountability Office Report. <http://www.gao.gov/htext/d06790t.html> ▲

FTA rule on emergency relief,

continued from page 6

Originally the proposal held for only presidential declarations of emergency to trigger the procedures. However, in the Final Rule these procedures can be triggered by a declaration of emergency by a state governor or mayor of the District of Columbia, and by a Presidential declaration of emergency.

Comments received also asked about the need for relief from DOT regulations, and the new rule instructs grantees and subgrantees to submit a request for relief from the DOT in the same manner as relief from FTA. In this situation, the FTA and DOT will work very closely, and decisions will not be delayed because of any involvement between the two agencies.

There were also suggestions that the new rule would cause a change to the relationship between the states and the federal government in emergency situations. The response by FTA was to emphasize that the rule involves granting relief from existing requirements, and not implementing any new regulations. All current levels of power among the various governments would remain.

How the rule works

The new rule means that in a given situation, certain steps will be taken that will result in the Docket being used. Here's a hypothetical scenario: several tornadoes hit Sedgwick County, causing massive damage and impacting both citizens' mobility as well as their homes. In response to the emergency, the Governor declares Sedgwick County a disaster area. In order for transit agencies to act accordingly—moving populations to safe areas during recovery, for example—regulations currently in place

Go to page 14



Beyond Web site basics — two examples

by Jacob Bustad

With more and more people looking to the 'net for information, the importance of a Web site as the image of an organization can be crucial. However, far from being a simple "brochure site" with little other information than contact info, technology is allowing for a level of interactivity that can take a site up a level.

With links to other relevant sites, as well as more advanced features like blogs, podcasts and streaming video, Web site technology can provide advantages that produce real results. For nonprofit organizations, this can mean reaching more members and volunteers, as well as raising funds—and for transit agencies, it can provide a better interface with a current or potential client. Read below to check out two examples of Web sites "done right," and pick up some tips on how you can put your Web site to work.

Heartspring.org

As a "worldwide center for children with special needs," Heartspring offers a unique and invaluable resource for both children and parents dealing with the challenges of a mental or physical handicap. The non-profit agency's headquarters are in Wichita, but the redevelopment of the organization's Web site has provided an opportunity to reach potential clients and supporters from around the US as well as the world. Katie Bishop, Director of Marketing for Heartspring, explained why the Web site upgrade has had such an impact.

"The redesign of our site was a



major overhaul—we hired a new Web developer a year ago, and we were determined to incorporate new technology that would not only allow us to get our information out, but also let people share their information with us," Bishop said. "The inclusion of video and on-line surveys really added a level of interactivity that we didn't have before."

The redesign was done completely in-house, but Bishop said a small group of employees had been doing research for ideas before the developer was hired.

"We looked at a lot of other sites, and took ideas from various sources, including the use of Flash, video and toolbars—we wanted something that was easily accessible and easily navigable. When Web sites aren't easy to use, it can be very frustrating, so we made that a top priority," Bishop said. "And of course, there was heavy testing of the site before we went live, and in fact that testing is an ongoing project, to always make sure we are taking full advantage of the resource."

The desire to constantly incorporate new technology is also part of Heartspring's strategy to be interac-

tive, and the organization looks to add new features or programs as they become available. According to Bishop, the most positive feedback has come from the videos—instead of simply listing information, now you can "see and hear" the agency's message. Heartspring is also working with a feature called "Ask Dr. Wayne," which allows anyone with Web access to ask a question of an expert at the Center.

"Our Web site has about 300,000 hits a month right now," Bishop said. "We have had numerous other agencies ask about what we did to get our site to its current design, and we have connected with people from both across the country and other parts of the world that otherwise might not have shown interest."

"Overall, the site has really brought the use of the Web as a resource for communication to the forefront of our strategy, and we will continue to make the most out of that resource," said Bishop.

Rcatgoingyourway.com

Web site technology can help promote any transit agency, no matter the size. The Reno County Area Transit (RCAT) site is one example of a smaller agency that is also using the Web to connect with the public. According to Lisa Loeb, Executive Director of RCAT, the site was last redesigned in 2004 but is considered a work in progress.

"We did the redesign with the help of our county's IT department; They had a basic template and general parameters—then I put in the information and they helped with some of the technical details," said Loeb. "I searched many other transit sites so I had some general ideas of

what I wanted to be on our site.”

The RCAT site includes links to other transit sites, both national and local, and also provides extensive information about the RCAT’s services. Along with a “Contact Us” section, which Loeb said makes it easy for users looking to contact the agency, the site features a map, passenger guidelines, and other documents that were previously not available online—even current weather conditions. Loeb said that the RCAT site has its own domain name (.com instead of .gov) that allows users to access the agency directly, rather than having to navigate through the Reno County homepage.

“With the Web site, we really wanted to provide information about our services so that someone new to the community or new to our agency could find out what we are, who we are, and how we do things,” Loeb said. “Since the site is an offshoot of the Reno County government, the public service aspect was important to us and we wanted to keep the community educated about how their dollars are being used.”

One new feature that Loeb is investigating: the agency currently has GPS locators on all of their vehicles, and if this information could be posted on the site in real time, it would allow clients to see the location of a vehicle and know how far it is from their pickup site. There aren’t any concrete plans for this feature, but it represents just one more example of how technology can make a Web site even more valuable to both the agency and the client.

“I have had people contact us saying that they think the site is very clear and concise, and I think that means we are achieving our goal to that end,” Loeb said.

The above are just two examples of Web sites “working” for an organiza-

tion, but they display the advantages of a well-designed site. By using technology, both information and interactivity can be combined to make any Web site one worth visiting. Check out the Heartspring and RCAT sites, and think about how the Web can work for you.

For more information, contact Bishop at Heartspring at kbishop@heartspring.org or (316) 634-8821, and Loeb through the “Contact Us” page of the Reno County site or (620) 694-2914. ▲

Customer service,

continued from page 9

the one prior. The steps are:

1. initial application/test
2. written test
3. driving aptitude test
4. interview, reference checks, medical exam, background check
5. selection

The CTAA has pointed out, however, that BOSS screenings only work for urban transit systems and do not consider the relatively low number of bus driver applicants a rural agency might have. Because of this, the National Transportation Safety Board has recommended that the CTAA work on a similar plan that can work for all transit systems.

Another example of a metropolitan customer service tactic is used by MTA’s **Metro-North Railroad**. Since 2000, the railroad has tested potential hires with the Hogan Personality Indicator (HPI), a five-factor test designed for businesses to assess customer service skills and aptitude for a given position. It measures a person’s skills and problem areas for a job setting. The test is used for screening internal and external applicants, and can be used as a one determinant of whether or not they get the job.

According to Tom Valentine,

manager of human resources for Metro-North Railroad, the HPI has been successful for them, and they are pleased with the front-line placements resulting from it.

One last suggestion for improving customer service: the MTA mentioned in *Best Foot Forward* to turn the customer service question internally to the organization. By working on inter-relationships and team building, your agency’s crew will communicate better in problem-solving if and when a customer service situation arises.

These examples of self-evaluation, good communication, hiring, and employee training, and a willingness to make service changes based on customer input, all contribute to an agency culture of, “The customer is always right.”

Sources:

Operating the Rural Transit Agency. RTAP National Transit Resource Center. Spring 2006.

Transportation Innovations for Seniors: A Synopsis of Findings in Rural America. The Beverly Foundation and The Community Transportation Association of America. July 2006.

Excellence in Customer Service in Transit Operations in Small-to-Medium Cities in Western Europe. International Transit Studies Program, Transit Cooperative Research Program. November, 2002.

“ShoreTel Success Stories,” www.shoretel.com/solutions/industry/downloads/forth_worth_success.pdf

The T News: <http://www.the-t.com/newsrelease/newsstrategicplan.html>

Best Foot Forward: Training Front Line Personnel to Provide Customer Quality Service, <http://pcac.org/reports/pdf/Best%20Foot%20ExecSumm.pdf> ▲

Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

Kansas RTAP Fall Driver Training Programs (Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance)

October 2	Garden City
October 3	Wichita
October 4	Emporia
October 11	Topeka
October 23	Pittsburg
October 25	Olathe
October 31	Manhattan
November 1	Hays
November 15	Salina

October 2-5, 2007

Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations Annual Conference. Little Rock, AR. 202-296-7051, x 4 or <http://www.ampo.org/content/index.php?pid=107>

November 7-9, 2007

2007 Federal Transit Administration Region VII SAFETEA-LU Training

in Kansas City, MO.

Learn the latest about programs, regulations and best practices related to SAFETEA-LU. Hear from FTA Regional Office staff and peers from Kansas, Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri. Visit the meeting website at <http://www.fta7meeting.org> or call Kristin Kelly at 785-864-2594 for a registration form. Deadline for early registration is October 19.

October 7-10, 2007

APTA 2007 Annual Meeting. Charlotte, North Carolina. For more information 202-496-4839 or http://www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/annual/index.cfm

November 6-8, 2007

GIS In Transit Conference 2007. Tampa, Florida. For more information 813-974-3120 or <http://www.nctr.usf.edu/gis/>

November 13-16, 2007

Center for Workers with Disabilities Annual Fall Meeting. Washington, D.C. For more information 202-682-0100 or http://cwf.aphsa.org/confs_calls_events/2007confs.asp

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

January 13-17, 2008

Transportation Research Board 87th Annual Meeting. Washington, D.C. For more information 202-334-2934 or <http://trb.org/Meeting/>

FTA rule on emergency relief, continued from page 11

would need to be deviated from to maximize the efficiency of the agencies' actions. In this situation, the agencies would request relief from the regulations through petitions to the Emergency Relief Docket, which would mean that the proper actions can be taken without waiting for approval from FTA, DOT or both. If the emergency can be anticipated (such as a hurricane), the Emergency Relief Docket will be opened by the FTA in advance of the event; if the emergency cannot be anticipated, the Docket will be opened within two business days of the emergency or disaster declaration.

Petitions must be posted in the Docket to receive consideration from FTA, and the docket will be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, at dms.dot.gov. Petitions can also be submitted by mail to the DOT Docket Management Facility,

Room PL-401, 400 7th Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590.

All petitions must:

- a) Identify the grantee or subgrantee and its geographic location;
- b) Specifically address how an FTA requirement in a policy statement, circular, or agency guidance will limit a grantee's or subgrantee's ability to respond to an emergency or disaster;
- c) Identify the policy statement, circular, guidance document and/or rule from which the grantee or subgrantee seeks relief; and
- d) Specify if the petition for relief is one-time or ongoing, and if ongoing, identify the time period for which the relief is requested. The time period may not exceed three months; however, additional time may be requested through a second petition for relief.

After the petition is entered into the docket, relief will be conditionally granted for three business days from the date it was submitted. During the three days, FTA will review the peti-

tion and may request further information from the grantee or subgrantee making the request. FTA will then post a decision on the Emergency Relief Docket. If FTA fails to post a decision within the three business days, the grantee or subgrantee may assume its petition is granted until and unless FTA states otherwise.

For more information on the new Final Rule, as well as further explanation of the comments made during the comment period and responses by the FTA, the *Federal Register* can be accessed at <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/>. Go to "Search our Publications."

Source:

"Emergency Procedures for Public Transportation Systems." *Federal Register*. January 9, 2007 72:5, accessed online January 18, 2007. <http://frwebgate3.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/waisgate.cgi?WAISdocID=15654332145+12+0+0&WAISaction=retrieve> ▲

Resources Order Form

Use this order form to order the resources listed here. There are two ways to order:
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.

Download or hard copy

Volunteer Drivers—A Guide to Best Practices. The Agency of Coordinated Transportation. [Download](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/vdg.default.htm) at: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transit/vdg.default.htm>
 or Send hard copy

Volunteer Driver Liability and Immunity by Matt Sundeen and Nicholas Farber. National Conference of State Legislatures. [Download](http://www.ncsl.org/print/transportation/vol_driverliab106.pdf) at: http://www.ncsl.org/print/transportation/vol_driverliab106.pdf
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Mobility Planning Services Institute—brochure. [Download](http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/docServer/MPS2008brochure.pdf?docID=4803) at: <http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/docServer/MPS2008brochure.pdf?docID=4803>
 or Send hard copy

12 Website Design Decisions Your Business or Organization Will Need to Make by Dr. Ralph Wilson, Web Marketing Today. [Download](http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/12design.htm) at: <http://www.wilsonweb.com/articles/12design.htm>
 or Send hard copy

Call to Customer Service. by the Customer Service Help Center. [Download](http://www.work911.com/customerservice/) at: <http://www.work911.com/customerservice/>
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Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities. [Download](http://www.dotcr.ost.dot.gov/asp/emergencyprep.asp) at: <http://www.dotcr.ost.dot.gov/asp/emergencyprep.asp>
 or Send hard copy

Are you Ready? An In-Depth Guide to Citizen Preparedness by FEMA. [Download](http://www.mnav.com/qualitative_research.htm) at: http://www.mnav.com/qualitative_research.htm
 or Send hard copy

Drug and Alcohol Recordkeeping Materials by the West Virginia DOT. This series of 14 printed folders (and sample forms that go in them) will help transit operators maintain their employees' pre-employment, random, post-accident, reasonable suspicion, return-to-duty/follow-up negative and positive test results as well as maintain training and vendor oversight records. Available on CD.
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Kansas Trans Reporter

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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 RTAP 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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