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

Moving from demand-response to fixed-route: Lessons learned

by Tom Worker-Braddock & Dan Nelson

As many Kansas communities struggle to keep pace with increasing demand for alternative transportation options, some demand-response transit providers are finding that implementing a fixed-route service is a viable, cost-effective solution. Factors such as aging demographics and growing population bases are taxing some demand-response transit services to a point where they cannot effectively serve the citizens who rely on them. By implementing a fixed-route bus



service, a few Kansas communities have found that they can cater to the general public while continuing to accommodate those with special

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ESPA launches new travel training

by Kelly Heavey

If you have wanted to learn more about travel training, here's a great opportunity for you. Easter Seals Project Action (ESPA) is seeking applicants to attend a new travel training course in 2008. Attendees will help ESPA refine its new travel training program for workers in travel and transit agencies. The course is scheduled three times:
—March 10-12, Portland, Oregon
—March 31-April 2, Chicago
—June 9-11, Chicago

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Demand-response to fixed,

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needs with existing demand-response service.

Transit agencies that moved from demand-response to fixed-route service:

1) **Reno County's RCAT service** has been running a fixed-route service since June of 2000 that grew out of the local Department of Aging's demand-response service. For Lisa Loeb, Reno County's transit director, running fixed routes and being the organization heading it up was not the original goal. Rather, the need for fixed route came out of study looking for ways to break down transportation barriers.

Back in the late 1990's, the Department of Aging's demand-response service was open to the general public, and reached capacity with clients having to wait longer and longer to be served. However, the service was still effective enough that many other social service agencies relied on it instead of exploring their own transportation options. At the same time, the Hutchinson/Reno County Chamber of Commerce realized that lack of reliable transportation for employees was impacting more and more businesses.

Beginning in August 1998, the county's Department of Aging brought together a stakeholder group including social services, city and county governments, a local community college, and the local economic development office. Through a Kansas Department of Aging grant, Reno County hired a consultant to perform a 6-month-long needs study on how to address the increasing demand for transit.

The resulting recommendation was a fixed route service. This rec-

ommendation came out at about the same time KDOT was completing its statewide transportation plan with a heavier focus on transit issues. This timing, along with financial support from Reno County Commissioners, allowed demand response and fixed route transit to be spun off from the Department of Aging and become Reno County Area Transit (RCAT).

2) **Finney County Transit**, with financial assistance from KDOT and the City of Garden City, began operating the new "City Link" fixed-route bus service in Garden City and the surrounding vicinity this past September. The new system has been received well by the community and experienced a 136 percent

increase in ridership after the first month of service. Prior to the shift to fixed-route service, Finney County Transit operated a strictly demand-response service throughout the county. However, according to transit manager Bonnie Burgardt, the demand for transit service was far greater than what Finney County Transit could provide by simply offering demand-response.

tion as a significant generator of transit demand. "We have a large migrant, non-English speaking community. Many did not understand the old system and were not able to access service."

Many people within the Garden City community were ready for additional transportation options. Burgardt said that when city officials surveyed the public, an overwhelming amount of respondents stated that transportation and transit were key issues in the community. With strong backing from city leaders, citizens, and KDOT, Burgardt and Finney County Transit employees began investigating what it would take to implement fixed-route transit.

"The implementation process, from beginning to end, took around

"The demand for transit was far greater than what Finney County could provide by simply offering demand-response service... Before implementing fixed route service, our schedules were constantly filled to the point that some people could not access the service."

nine months," Burgardt said. "We had assistance and advice from Lisa Loeb and her staff at Reno County Transit, as well as Cheryl Fisher from KDOT." A steering committee was also created early-on to guide decision-making.

3) **OCCK, Inc.** offers demand-response service within the city of Salina, and also has fixed routes going to 53 miles north to Concordia, and west out to Ellsworth. The organization has been working with the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) at the KU Transportation Center (the same organization that publishes the *Kansas TransReporter*) and KDOT for about 6 months on a fea-

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sibility study for fixed route service within the city. According to Pat Wallerius, vice-president of OCCK, KDOT has been supportive of implementing a fixed route within the city for three or four years. Wallerius was originally hesitant to commit to a fixed bus service within the city until the success of a fixed route implemented in a similar-sized city, Hutchinson, began to change his mind. “Still,” he says, he wants to make sure “OCCK is fully ready and prepared to run a fixed-route service” before it begins. If OCCK does decide to start a fixed route service, Wallerius expects it will be two years before buses hit the streets. He expects the ridership will go up, but isn’t sure if the user demographics will change. However, Wallerius does anticipate that fixed routes will give users more options.

4) Developmental Services of Northwest Kansas (DSNWK), based in Hays, operates a variety of services, including a demand response within the city of Hays, a fixed-schedule demand response route throughout the county, a saferide program three nights a week, and a fixed single route three days a week for five hours a day.

With the advent of new services, the current ridership for the overall system is increasing and projected to reach 58,000 riders this year. Ron Straight, DSNWK’s transportation manager, along with KDOT, has been looking at implementing a city-wide fixed route as a way to reduce demand on their demand-response service. He sees that this will be politically popular, as city and county commissioners hope that having a city-wide fixed route will ultimately reduce overall costs. However, he foresees less enthusiasm coming from current clients, some of whom would be ineligible to ride demand-

response once the fixed-route service is in place.

Things that went well

According to Bonnie Burgardt at Finney County Transit, shifting to a

“The City has received more positive comments regarding this project than any other project it has undertaken, ever.”

fixed-route transit system has been popular with residents so far. “The new transit system has been very well-received,” Burgardt said. “The City has received more positive comments regarding this project than any other project it has undertaken, ever.”

The new fixed-route service provides mobility and independence to more Finney County residents. “By implementing fixed-route, we are serving more young people, as well as disabled. There is a greater sense of independence for disabled individuals,” Burgardt said.

For Reno County, exploring and implementing the process with a wide range of stakeholders—including everybody from social service agencies to city and county government to business interests—created a wide range of support for moving from demand-response to fixed-route service.

Convincing some current demand-response clients to make the switch took a little more effort. To make it more comfortable for clients to get used to riding on a fixed route instead of demand-response, Reno County utilized volunteers as “ride buddies” for a year after the new system started. These volunteers helped clients switch to fixed routes, and offered to ride with the clients whenever they were uncomfortable or ner-

vous about riding the fixed route instead of using door-to-door service.

Things that didn’t go well

Lack of funding and equipment were two commonly-cited issues that transit managers encountered during their transition to fixed-route service. Burgardt said that to serve low-income areas outside of Garden City, additional transit vehicles will be needed. Further, lack of funding prohibits Finney County Transit from extending operating hours, which would likely increase ridership.

Implementing a fixed-route system while still running a demand-response service took a lot more staff resources than originally envisioned, according to Lisa Loeb of RCAT. Pat Wallerius of OCCK supported that statement, saying that any fixed route that gets implemented in Salina will have to depend on additional resources, other than what’s currently used for demand response.

Recommendations from the interviewees

Burgardt has several recommendations for other cities that might be considering a shift to fixed-route.

- Keep routes under an hour to allow for easier scheduling and increased ridership
- Start the schedule early in the day to catch the AM peak rush and work trips.
- Have an ADA plan in place prior to implementation. This is a must-have for implementing a fixed route; it is mandated by law.
- Take time to create the fixed-route system that best suits your community’s needs. Do not rush into it or you may end up creating more problems in the future.

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Demand-response to fixed,
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Lisa Loeb of Reno County recommends looking at all possible partners, from hospitals, community colleges, or whatever organization you need to partner with so “you can be what they need you to be.” She also suggested getting the public involved.

“Don’t try to cram fixed-route service down people’s throats. Get (community) leaders to recognize the benefits of good public transportation, regardless if it’s demand-response or fixed-route,” said Loeb. When a city’s economic development department can show that the community has a reliable transportation service, it becomes a tool for attracting businesses.

Pat Wallerius of OCCK in Salina recommends organizations do their homework before committing to fixed route. “Research it, make sure you’re fully aware of what it will take; take time to look at the overall picture, and make sure you can follow through with what you offer.”

Conclusion

Fixed-route service might be a viable alternative for communities whose demand-response transit systems are reaching capacity. The underlying idea to take away from the experience of the communities interviewed here is to work with various local and state partners and stakeholders who have an interest in increasing transportation options in your community. ▲

ESPA travel training opportunity, continued from page 1

The training sessions are federally funded, and will provide lodging and two meals a day. The only costs to participants are airfare and dinners. Each two-and-a-half day session will train approximately 24 participants selected by ESPA.

An application process is available on ESPA’s Web site (<http://projectaction.easterseals.com>). **Please note: The application deadline for the March course in Portland is**

January 11. Half of the training will be in the classroom, and half will be hands-on learning. There will also be pre-and-post event training for participants. The session trainers are active professionals in travel training (see below).

ESPA Training and Technical Assistance Manager Karen Wolf-Branigin says the program will benefit anyone, but workers with little experience will be its priority. “What

ESPA travel training

Members of the curriculum design board

- Nancy Beukema, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Mich.
- Doug Birnie, Federal Transit Administration, Washington, D.C.
- Kathy Cox, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, Boston, Mass.
- Margaret Dorey, Edmonton Transit System, Edmonton, Alberta
- Sarah Green, Grand Rapids Transit, Grand Rapids, Mich.
- Bryna Helfer, Federal Transit Administration, Washington, D.C.
- Marlene Lawler, The Kennedy Center, Trumbull, Conn.
- Frances Rankos, Pierce Transit, Lakewood, Wash.
- Mary Riegelmayr, Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation & Developmental Disabilities, Rocky River, Ohio
- Jim Shampooe, RTC of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas, Nev.
- Lisa Threatt, Dallas Area Rapid Transit, Dallas, Texas
- Judy Tymick, Municipality of Anchorage Public Transportation Department, Anchorage, Alaska
- Kevin Welch, Paratransit, Inc., Sacramento, Calif.
- Julie Wilcke, Ride Connection, Portland, Ore.
- Sarah Witter, Bucks County Schools, Doylestown, Pa.

Faculty members

- Chris Hunter, lead travel trainer with Ride Connection, Ridewise Program, Portland, Ore.
- Mary Riegelmayr, regional travel coordinator with the Cuyahoga County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities, Rocky River, Ohio
- Frances Rankos, travel instructor, Pierce Transit, Lakewood, Wash.
- Leland J. Schooley, mobility specialist with Community Transit in Everett, Wash.
- Kevin C. Welch, assistant to the director of mobility options of Paratransit, Inc., Sacramento, Calif.

we're looking for is people who are either brand new to the field or someone who is the only travel trainer in their agency or in their community," with little opportunity to learn from others, she says.

Wolf-Branigin says that the training is designed to give participants practical information in a practical way. "You can only write so

"What we're looking for is people who are either brand new to the field or someone who is the only travel trainer in their agency or in their community."

much down on a piece of paper," she says. [The training] is designed to teach things like, "this is where I stand when I'm working with a particular person and teaching them to cross the street."

If you're not one of the 75 or so selected to attend one of the three sessions, the entire curriculum is available to download free of charge on ESPA's Web site. Click on the Free Resources link.

For more information about ESPA's travel training curriculum and training events, contact Karen Wolf-Branigin at (800) 659-6428 or kbranigin@easterseals.com.

Sources:

"ESPA pilots travel training curriculum." Easter Seals Project Action Update, April 2007.

The Association of Travel Instruction. www.travelinstruction.org/what_is_ati.html

ESPA: www.projectaction.easterseals.com ▲

FTA Q's and A's

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by Jacob Bustad
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[Here are a few more questions and answers from the Federal Transit Administration's Drug and Alcohol Discussion Forum at <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/>. Answers are from Mike Reddington, FTA.]

Question: Our agency does on-site drug testing, versus taking them to a remote testing site. During a "shy-bladder" scenario, does the driver have to be placed in a private area while they are drinking water and waiting to attempt another donation?

Answer: During the potential 3-hour time period in a shy bladder situation, when a safety-sensitive employee has been provided with 40 ounces of fluid, there is no requirement that the safety-sensitive employee be in a private area. The waiting area may be open to public access, as are most waiting rooms at collections sites. The collection site must be able to monitor the employee during this potential 3-hour period.

40.193(b)(3) states: "If the employee refuses to make the attempt to provide a new urine specimen or leaves the collection site before the collection process is complete, you must discontinue the collection, note the fact on the 'Remarks' line of the CCF (Step 2), and immediately notify the DER. This is a refusal to test."

Question: I have looked and do not see a listing of what job positions/duties are classified by DOT or FTA as safety sensitive and require [us to] subject those employees doing those jobs to drug and alcohol testing. Where is a list of safety sensitive job

titles/duties? My union and employer are in the middle of contract negotiations, as part of the bargaining sessions, [and] my employer wants to expand the job classifications they say are safety sensitive and subject to random testing. Some of these positions seem silly insofar as



Is a dispatcher position considered safety-sensitive? How about a library aid?

being safety sensitive..ie: Library Aid and Library Assistant. We already have provisions for reasonable suspicion testing for all personnel as well as required random testing for all personnel holding commercial drivers licenses. What else is required under federal laws?

Answer: 49 CFR Part 655—Prevention of Alcohol Misuse and Prohibited Drug Use in Transit Operations—is the Federal Transit Administration drug and alcohol regulation.

49 CFR Part 655.4, "Definitions," contains the following definitions that are applicable to your inquiry.

—Covered employee means a

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Gaining “New Freedom” for employees with disabilities

by Jacob Bustad and Pat Weaver

The American with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) put requirements in place that assisted those with disabilities in gaining access to public transportation services. Now, there is the federal New Freedom Program (NFP), a new program funded under SAFETEA-LU in 2005, to provide service beyond ADA requirements in supporting new public transportation services and public transportation alternatives. The program supports transportation to jobs or services and facilities that improve mobility for persons with disabilities.

Kansas New Freedom Program

By “going beyond” the ADA requirements, the Kansas New Freedom Program will provide funding for planning, capital and/or operating costs to new public transportation services and transportation alternatives that directly address the transit needs of those with disabilities. Eligible projects can include but are not limited to:

- extended evening & weekend hours
- guaranteed ride home service
- expanding fixed-route service
- ridesharing and car-pooling ideas
- expanding demand-response service
- shuttle service, such as park & ride
- promotion through marketing
- making accessibility improvements, and/or
- providing travel training.

Details about these and other examples can be found in the *New Freedom Program Guidance and Application Instructions*, which can be downloaded at:

www.fta.dot.gov/laws/circulars/leg_reg_6624.html.

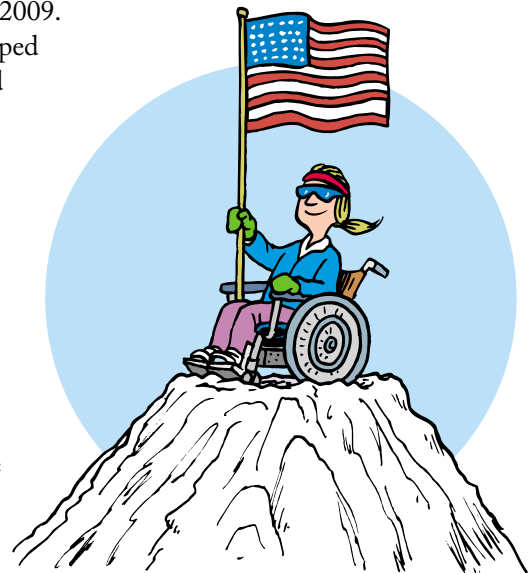
Funding and eligibility

The national NFP funding level in FY 2007 is \$81 million, potentially growing to \$92.5 million in FY 2009. A formula allocation was developed for large urban, small urban, and nonurbanized areas (less than 50,000 population). The Kansas Department of Transportation will administer the nonurbanized program (20 percent of the total allocation). For Kansas, this program translates to a total of approximately \$504,000 for nonurbanized areas from FY06-FY09. Approximately \$366,000 will be available in the first round of applications (FY06-FY08), according to John Rosacker, Assistant Bureau Chief for the Kansas Department of Transportation. As with the Section 5311 program, these funds require a 20 percent local match for capital projects and a 50 percent local match for operations.

Eligible recipients in nonurbanized areas include private non-profit organizations, state or local governments, and operators of public transportation services, as sub-grantees to the Kansas Department of Transportation. Application packages have been mailed out to Kansas transportation providers and are **due back to KDOT no later than January 25, 2008**.

Projects will be selected for funding through a competitive selection process. Each application will be reviewed and scored on the basis of project need, implementation plan and evaluation, project budget, part-

nerships and program outreach, program effectiveness and performance indicators, and innovation. Priority will be given to those projects that



New Freedom won't get your riders to the top of the mountain, but it will help them get to their jobs.

meet needs developed through the coordinated transit plan for the coordinated transit district.

For more details about funding and eligibility, as well as further information about NFP in general, consult the New Freedom (Section 5317) Application Packet at the Kansas Department of Transportation Web site: <http://www.ksdot.org/burTransPlan/pubtrans/index.asp> or contact your KDOT program consultant at (785) 296-0343. ▲

Handling the media during a crisis

by Kelly Heavey

The media doesn't have the best reputation these days. Between entertainment gossip, slanted coverage and some misrepresented news situations, many people just don't trust news sources. But the media still play a critical role in our communities during an emergency. As a representative of a public transit organization, you have the responsibility to respond to the media through thick and thin. If disaster strikes—a security threat, natural disaster, or serious accident for example—the aftermath is a delicate burden to bear. The situation must be first understood by reporters, and then communicated to your public accurately. This article will provide some tips on how to interact with the media in a transit emergency.

Responding to disaster

The first step is preparation. Most Kansas transit agencies are too small

Your designated media contact should be trained on what information is appropriate to share with the public. Think about what happened, what it means to John Q. Public, and what you are doing about it. The rule is, “maximum disclosure, minimum delay.”

to employ a professional public relations representative, but an alternative is to name one person in your agency as a media contact. This individual will be your agency's “face” to the public, and all media inquiries should be referred to him or her. This establishes one voice and prevents

contradictory quotes and information from different workers in your agency. In the case of an extreme disaster, however, this rule might have to be broken to have your most senior management representative or elected official speak publicly.

“The bigger the incident, the higher-profile person you want up front,” Gary Gleason, president of Colorado-based Communiqué USA, says. “Many times you have a spokesperson who handles the media, but when it's a really serious event... certainly you want the chairman of the board or the CEO out there. The public expects that.”

Your designated media contact should be trained on what information is appropriate to share with the public. Think about what happened, what it means to “John Q. Public,” and what you are doing about it. The rule is, “maximum disclosure, minimum delay.”



Practice makes perfect

If a press conference needs to be held, practice makes perfect. The representative should rehearse what will be said and have company statistics handy—such as the average number of riders and average route times—in case an unforeseen question comes up. When responding to an accident, it is important to readily have details about the accident investigation process and

your agency's drug and alcohol testing procedures. If you can't comment on something—a personnel matter for example—tell the reporter why.

The press release

Press releases are designed to answer questions

and clear up potential confusion. If you address newsworthy topics, the media will disburse the information to the public through their outlets. The release should address the who, what, and where of the event, as well as what is being done about it. This doesn't mean the media won't call for clarification or more information, however. Always list your designated media contact's information at the top of the page.

The Joint Information System/ Joint Information Center

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) requires use of the Joint Information System (JIS), and recommends use of a Joint

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Handling the media, continued from page 7

Information Center (JIC) during major emergencies. Sharing of information through the JIS ensures that the numerous stakeholders involved in a crisis deliver to the public the most accurate, coordinated, timely, appropriate, and understandable information possible.

JIS and JIC are not interchangeable terms. A JIS is the concept of information sharing between agencies so every one is on the same page. A JIC is an actual location where representatives gather to handle emergency public information. Gleason is not aware of any transit JICs in Kansas, but cautions that a transit emergency can strike anywhere.

“Without question, every transit agency faces the risk of a mass casualty accident ... Immediate [media] attention on that would be enormous. The only way to manage that kind of pressure is to plan for it and have systems in place to accommodate that.”

Other resources

As a rural transit agency, it is important that you communicate with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) in your county for information on how you might be a resource in a local emergency, or what resources you might need. If you aren't sure who your LEPC contact is, visit the Kansas Division of Emergency Management at http://www.accesskansas.org/kdem/contact_us/cocoordinator_lepclisting.shtml.

In 2000, the U.S. National Response Team published a guide book, *Joint Information Center Model*, for any agency or organization. It states that a JIC's purpose is to serve as a “communication hub” for stakeholders. To read the manual, visit [http://www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/\\$File/JIC.pdf?Open](http://www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/$File/JIC.pdf?Open)

Element. More recently, the NIMS Integration Center released an online course in emergency public information, something that should be completed by whomever you designate as your agency media representative. That training module can be found at <http://www.training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is702.asp>.

As the saying goes, better safe than sorry. And if you can't prevent the accident, you can try to prevent misunderstanding by providing information to your news resources. For more information on managing the media during disaster, go to www.disasterprep.info.

Sources:

“Managing the Media During Disaster,” by Gary Gleason.

“Communications 101: Dealing with the Media,” by Scott Bogren, <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=219>

Joint Information Center Model. National Response Team. [www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/\\$File/JIC.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/$File/JIC.pdf?OpenElement) www.disasterprep.info ▲

FTA Q's and A's

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person, including an applicant or transferee, who performs or will perform a safety-sensitive function for an entity subject to this part. A volunteer is a covered employee if:

(1) The volunteer is required to hold a commercial driver's license to operate the vehicle; or (2) The volunteer performs a safety-sensitive function

for an entity subject to this part and receives remuneration in excess of his or her actual expenses incurred while engaged in the volunteer activity.

—Performing (a safety-sensitive function) means a covered employee is considered to be performing a safety-sensitive function and includes any period in which he or she is actually performing, ready to perform, or immediately available to perform such functions.

—Safety-sensitive function means any of the following duties, when performed by employees of recipients, subrecipients, operators, or contractors:

- (1) Operating a revenue service vehicle, including when not in revenue service;
- (2) Operating a nonrevenue service vehicle, when required to be operated by a holder of a Commercial Driver's License;
- (3) Controlling dispatch or movement of a revenue service vehicle;
- (4) Maintaining (including repairs, overhaul and rebuilding) a revenue service vehicle or equipment used in revenue service. This section does not apply to the following: an employer who receives funding under 49 U.S.C. 5307 or 5309, is in an area less than 200,000 in population, and contracts out such services; or an employer who receives funding under 49 U.S.C. 5311 and contracts out such services;
- (5) Carrying a firearm for security purposes.

There are many requirements under federal law, the majority are covered under the DOT regulation, 49 CFR Part 40, and the FTA regulation, 49 CFR Part 655. ▲



Tips for great telephone customer service for transit agencies

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by Pat Weaver
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All the transit marketing dollars in the world won't make up for poor customer service on the phone. As a transit agency, your staff may conduct a good deal of your business on the telephone. If you operate a demand-response service, your customers probably schedule their rides by telephone. Riders also call to let you know that they're cancelling a ride (hopefully), to ask a question about service or a late bus, or perhaps to find out if bad weather is going to close down service. A customer may call to complain or to give a compliment.

No matter what the purpose of the call, whoever answers the phone—the receptionist, the dispatcher, a call taker—or you—creates the first impression for your transit service.

A good first impression may mean that a potential customer becomes a repeat customer, that regular customers speak positively of the service you provide, and that your local funding agencies hear those positive comments.

How can you make sure that you're creating a good first impression?

Here are a few tips:

The importance of the greeting.

Consider what your agency's standard greeting is and make sure it is concise, helpful and friendly. Customers should feel just as wel-



come and comfortable on the phone as they do when they board your bus.

Answer the phone quickly. Never let the telephone ring more than twice before answering. The last thing a customer wants to do is wait, no matter how routine the call may be. We all know what it feels like to be on a long hold while listening to a recorded message or music.

Know your agency. If your agency has a receptionist who routes calls throughout the agency, including the transit department, be sure that he or she is familiar with your program, can direct the call to the right person, or has some information that will help if the correct person is not available. There is nothing more frustrating for a customer than to feel they are being shuttled from one person to another.

Document. Document everything that happens with the customer's call, including time and date and a description of the ride request, question, or problem. If it's a ride request, make sure you have recorded the information accurately according to your scheduling procedures. If it's a question or a problem, record the actions taken and any follow-up contact. Keep the information on file for a length of time based on an agency policy that makes sense for the circumstance.

Make time. If you're short on time and the call is not urgent, politely explain the situation to the customer and get his/her contact information, including a convenient time when you can call back to discuss the issue at length.

Limit automation. If you need to use an automated answering system, your ride scheduling line should be one of the first options callers encounter. Limit any subsequent menus to as few selection options as possible.

Follow up. Always follow up with callers to make sure the issue was addressed to his/her satisfaction. You may receive some valuable suggestions for improving your service or—even better—a happy customer who will encourage others to ride the bus.

Source:

Adapted from *5 Tips for Great Telephone Customer Service*.

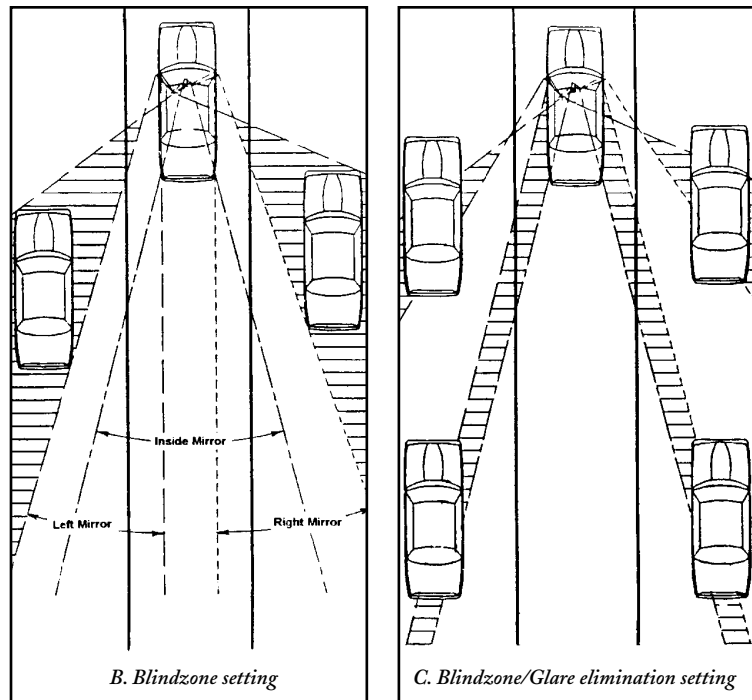
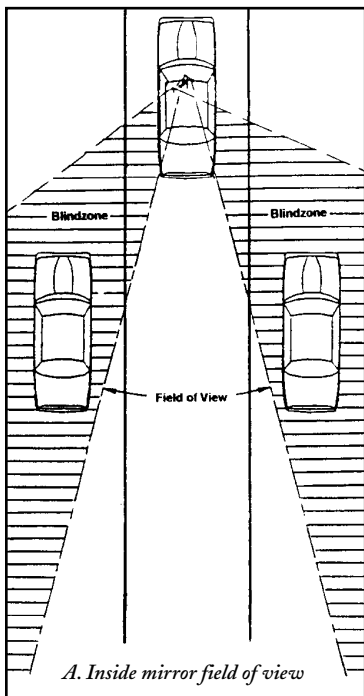
http://www.score.org/telephone_customer_service.html. Accessed November 27, 2007. ▲

Blind zone accidents and how to prevent them

by Jacob Bustad

Nearly every driver is familiar with blindzones; sometimes a horn blast reminds us of their existence. A National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) study indicated that of the nearly 630,000 lane change/merge (LCM) crashes that occur every year, nearly 60 percent of the drivers involved did not see the other vehicle.

In 1995, the Society of Automobile Engineers (SAE International) published a paper showing a method for setting mirrors that substantially reduces blindzones. SAE also published a public service brochure on the topic. Drawing from these resources, this article will detail the causes of blindzones, and how you can reduce them using correct mirror adjustment techniques.



Blindzones and mirrors

Most vehicles are equipped with one inside mirror and two outside mirrors. The inside mirror provides the widest field of view, and the most information about traffic to the rear. This makes the inside mirror the primary mirror for any driver. In Drawing A, we can see that the inside mirror gives a large field of view, but also causes blindzones in which a vehicle cannot be seen in the inside mirror or in the driver's peripheral vision—the driver must turn and look into the blindzone.

In a bus, the inside mirror may be useless to the driver if the field of view is blocked by passengers or a vehicle is following the bus too closely to be seen.

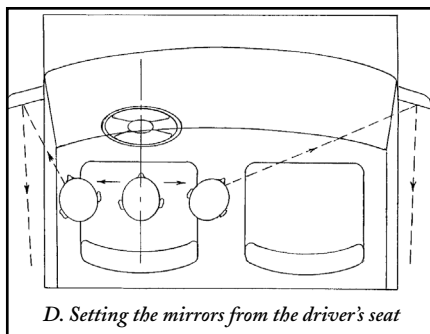
The two outside mirrors both provide a field of view that is about half that of the inside mirrors. In Drawing B, we can see that the outside mirrors are typically set so that the sides of the vehicle are just visi-

ble. This setting helps to reduce the size of the inside mirror blindzone, but do not eliminate them completely. Blindzones capable of “hiding” a vehicle still exist, which is why setting the outside mirrors is called the “blindzone setting.” The driver still must turn and look, and this can be even more of a problem for transit drivers with larger vehicles and passengers in their field of vision.

Drawing C is an example of how blindzones can be substantially reduced. The outside mirrors are now rotated outward to look into the blindzones present in Drawing B, instead of providing a view along the sides of the vehicle. There are now four smaller blindzones.

Correctly setting the mirrors

To reduce blindzones, then, drivers can employ the “Blindzone/ Glare Elimination Setting,” or BGE Setting, when adjusting their mirrors. The basic premise is that out-



side mirrors should be turned outward by about 15 degrees from the typical setting. This can be done by placing your head against the driver's side window when adjusting the driver-side outside mirror, and placing your head in the middle of the car when adjusting the passenger-side mirror. Drawing D shows how this process works comparison to the traditional setting, in which a driver adjusts mirrors while sitting in the normal driving position.

To test the new settings, watch a car as it passes you. It should appear in the outside mirror before it leaves the inside mirror, and appear in your peripheral vision before it leaves the outside mirror. Blindzones have been substantially reduced.

When changing lanes, you should first look in the inside mirror for vehicles approaching from the rear, and then look at the outside mirrors to see if a vehicle is approaching from the side. If you can see the entire front of a vehicle in the inside mirror, and that vehicle is not gaining on you, it is safe to change lanes. After passing a vehicle, wait until you see the front of the vehicle you just passed in the inside mirror before changing back into your original lane.

The BGE mirror technique can be a little trickier when used in transit vehicles, especially when trying to reach the passenger-side mirror from the middle of the vehicle. If it's too far to reach, scoot closer to the window and adjust the mirror, then dou-

ble-check the view by moving back to the middle of the vehicle. By correctly setting the vehicle's mirrors, both blindzones—and the potential danger they cause—can be minimized. Properly adjusted mirrors, frequent checking, looking over your shoulder to be extra sure, and moving your seat will all help to reduce the blind spots and improve safety in your vehicle.

For more detailed information on this technique for reducing

blindspots, read SAE's brochure entitled *A Simple Way to Prevent Blindzone Accidents*, available for free download at www.northstarbmw.org/forms/blindzone.pdf, or the SEA paper on which it is based—#950601. Hard copies of the brochure are free (see page 15); the paper is available at www.sae.org.

Drawings courtesy of SAE International—dedicated to advancing mobility engineering worldwide. www.sae.org. ▲

NIMS and the transit manager

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 by Dan Nelson

An unfortunate fact of life in the Heartland is the threat of natural disasters. In just the past year, Kansas communities have endured paralyzing ice and winter storms, catastrophic tornadoes, and widespread flooding throughout portions of the state. While these types of events can't be avoided, their effects can be mitigated through proper preparation and preparedness. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in conjunction with Department of Homeland Security, has developed programs and protocol to ensure that disaster recovery efforts are as efficient and effective as possible.

The National Incident Management System (NIMS) was developed by the Department of Homeland Security to more effectively coordinate disaster response. According to the NIMS Web site, (<http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/index.shtml>) the system's benefits include, "a unified approach to incident management; standard com-

mand and management structures; and emphasis on preparedness, mutual aid and resource management."

To be NIMS-compliant, all local agencies must complete a series of training sessions aimed at educating first-responders and other supporting personnel that might assist in disaster recovery efforts. While NIMS training should be considered vital to any agency's disaster preparedness plans in and of itself, completing the training seminars also fulfills the requirements needed to receive federal funding in the event a disaster occurs. This not only applies to communities that are directly impacted by a disaster, but also to agencies that assist other communities' recovery efforts.

Connie Shellhammer, director and manager of the Harper County Commission on Aging, said that NIMS training proved useful during her agency's role in recovery efforts following this summer's flooding in Southeast Kansas. In particular, Shellhammer said that NIMS training was effective in instructing her who to report to and what procedures to follow as soon as her assis-

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NIMS and transit manager,

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tance was requested. Her agency provided assistance to Harper, a town in northern Harper County, by transporting bedding and cots to Red Cross shelters using transit vehicles. Even though the scope of work performed for the Red Cross was limited to material transport, the experience provided a valuable opportunity to put NIMS training to work while helping out a neighboring community.

The NIMS training curriculum include a series of courses geared toward entry level first responders and disaster workers, including those who work for support agencies such as public transit providers. The two required courses for individuals in these roles are **ICS-100:**

Introduction to Incident Command System (ICS) and FEMA IS-700: NIMS: An Introduction. The objective of ICS-100 is to orient the responder to purpose of the ICS, describe the basic features of the ICS, and to delineate the roles of each member of the ICS. FEMA IS-700 explains NIMS components, concepts, and principles.

Both courses required for transit managers can be taken free of charge online as interactive Web-based classes. An individual can either complete the course requirements online, or alternatively, they may download the materials and complete them in a group or classroom setting.

To access these resources, go to <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>. Once at this Web site, select the desired course from the menu in the middle of the page. From there you will be taken to the Web site for the selected course. On the right side of the page are two options for taking a Web-based class. Both courses take approximately three hours and con-

NIMS Training Audience	Required Training
<p><i>Entry-level first responders and disaster workers to include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EMS Personnel • Firefighters • Hospital staff • Law Enforcement Personnel • Public Works/Utility Personnel • Skilled Support Personnel • Other emergency management response, support, volunteer personnel at all levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS-100: Introduction to ICS • FEMA IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction
<p><i>First-line supervisors to include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single resource leaders • Field supervisors • Other emergency response/management personnel that require a higher level of ICS/NIMS training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS-100: Introduction to ICS • ICS-200: Basic ICS • FEMA IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction
<p><i>Mid-level, required:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-level management including strike team leaders • Task force leaders • Unit leaders • Division/group supervisors • Branch Directors <p><i>Mid-level, recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency operations center staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS-100: Introduction to ICS • ICS-200: Basic ICS • ICS-300: Intermediate ICS • FEMA IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction • FEMA IS-800.A: National Response Plan (NRP), An Introduction
<p><i>Top-level, required:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Command and general staff • Select department heads with multi-agency coordination system responsibilities • Area commanders • Emergency commanders <p><i>Recommended:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency operations center managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICS-100: Introduction to ICS • ICS-200: Basic ICS • ICS-300: Intermediate ICS • ICS-400: Advanced ICS • FEMA IS-700: NIMS, An Introduction • FEMA IS-800.A: National Response Plan (NRP), An Introduction

tain a series of lessons that should be completed in order. When you complete all the lessons, return to the class Web site for the course you

have just taken and select the “Take Final Exam” link. The Web site will provide guidance as to how to com-

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Seniortransportation.net – Supporting transit for seniors

by Jacob Bustad

A new Web site designed to address transportation issues of senior citizens has recently been unveiled—seniortransportation.net, developed by the National Center on Senior Transportation. The NCST is housed within Project ACTION, a part of the Easter Seals Office of Public Affairs. The site was launched last June 29, after six months of development.

One segment of the Web site's information is directly aimed at transit. Along the left side of the home page there is a link entitled "For Transportation Providers." This section includes resources for transit providers that serve older adults, including training and educational sources, tips and facts about the growing population of older adults and how this will affect transit, and more. Some examples include:

- A link to information about the Mark IV "Luminator" system, which incorporates infrared technology to communicate with a transit commuter with impaired vision. In this system, each bus that passes a given stop is equipped with a small emitter, and the commuter would be equipped with a receiver. When a bus passes the stop, the emitter sends data to the receiver, which then produces a voice stating the bus number, route, or other information.

- A link to Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the requirements placed on transit, as compiled by the Council for Disability Rights.

- A Transportation Directory (under the "Service Guidance" link),



What is the National Center on Senior Transportation?

The NCST, which celebrated a one-year anniversary last August, was founded as a partnership between Easter Seals and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Other groups involved include the Community Transportation Association of America, the National Association of State Units on Aging, the American Society of Aging and the Beverly Foundation. All of these groups comprise a national steering committee which guides the NCST. The presence of these different groups within the NCST means that a large and diverse amount of information will be made available via the NCST's Web site.

that provides links and other contact information to several organizations that can assist transit providers in serving older adults. Examples include the "Eldercare Locator" program created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and similar programs by the Beverly Foundation and Easter Seals, among others.

All of this information is meant to help providers achieve the NCST mission "to increase transportation options for older adults and enhance their ability to live more independently within their communities throughout the United States."

Check out the site to make sure you are up to date about to senior transportation.

The National Center on Senior Transportation is administered jointly by the Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Administration on Aging, and funded through a cooperative agreement with the FTA.

Source:

"New Web site supports senior transportation goals." *Easter Seals Project ACTION Update*. August 2007, pg. 5. ▲

Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

January 23, 2008

Steps to Securing Funding for a New Travel Training Program. Online. United We Ride. For more information: <http://www.projectaction.easterseals.com>

February 11-12, 2008

Legal Affairs Seminar. San Antonio, TX. APTA. For more information: http://www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/legalaff/

February 17-19, 2008

SWTA Annual Conference & Expo. Fort Worth, TX. SWTA. For more information: (512) 291-8870, kjoyner@swta.org

February 27-29, 2008

Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Trainer Certification Course. Lawrence, Kansas. For more information: Kristin Kelly, Kansas RTAP, 785-864-2594.

Kansas RTAP Fall Driver Training Programs

March 25 – Wakeeney
 March 26 – Salina (tentative)
 March 27 – Manhattan
 Apr 1 – Dodge City
 Apr 2 – Hutchinson
 Apr 3 – Winfield
 Apr 10 – Topeka
 Apr 15 – Great Bend
 Apr 22 – Chanute
 Apr 24 – Olathe

For more information, contact Kristin Kelly, Kansas RTAP, 785-864-2594, kbkelly@ku.edu

May 2-May 7, 2008

APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference & International Bus Rodeo. Austin, TX. For more information: http://www.apta.com/conferences_calendar/bus/

June 17-18, 2007

PDS: Effective, Efficient Dispatching and Scheduling. Certificate Program. Wichita, Kansas. For more information: Kristin Kelly, Kansas RTAP, 785-864-2594, kbkelly@ku.edu

August 5-7, 2008

State Public Transit Partnerships Conference & FTA State Programs Meeting. Providence, RI. For more information: (202) 624-3625.

September 15-17, 2008

Kansas Public Transit Association Annual Meeting. Wichita, KS. Kansas Public Transit Association. For more information: <http://www.kstransit.com>

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

October 19-22, 2008

18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. Omaha, Nebraska. TRB Committee on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. For more information: <http://www.trbrural-conference.org>

NIMS and transit manager

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plete the final exam. When complete, you will receive an email indicating pass/fail confirmation. If you pass, you will receive a course completion certificate via email.

Shellhammer took both ICS-100 and FEMA IS-700 through a group session administered by the Harper County Homeland Security/EMS director, and took the certification test online. While she is the only employee at her agency to have taken these courses to date, she indicated that her transportation coordinator will likely attend classes to become certified.

Shellhammer indicated that while she feels her current level of NIMS training helped her effectively participate in last summer's flood recovery efforts, additional NIMS courses and other disaster preparedness training

will also allow her agency to better prepare for the unexpected.

In fact, FEMA offers a number of other NIMS-related courses, as well as other disaster-response classes, through its Emergency Management Institute. While most transit managers are only required to take ICS-100 and FEMA IS-700, managers in higher-level supervisory roles may be required to take more advanced NIMS courses, as indicated in the

It is imperative that all transit managers become NIMS-certified.

table on page 11. Even office employees in non-managerial positions can benefit from NIMS or other FEMA-administered training, and are welcome to do so. It never hurts to have as many disaster-response-trained individuals as possible.

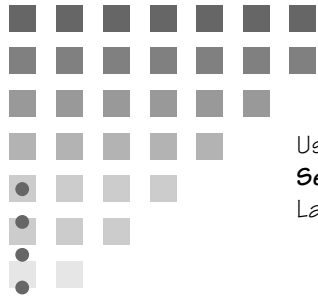
Being online, NIMS training can

be completed at any time. However, be sure to check with your local jurisdiction to see if group face-to-face training sessions are available. NIMS compliance guidelines are usually updated every fiscal year, so it is important to check with your local EMS or Homeland Security director or the FEMA-NIMS Web site to ensure that you and your employees are up-to-date on NIMS training.

Dealing with disaster recovery is one of the most difficult situations a public official or transit manager will ever face. However, NIMS provides the training necessary

to effectively contribute to the recovery effort. It is imperative that all transit managers become NIMS-certified, not only to qualify for federal disaster relief funds, but more importantly, to gain valuable knowledge and expertise that can be applied in emergency situations. ▲

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.

Resources to download

Fixed-Route Transit Ridership Forecasting and Service Planning Methods, TCRP Synthesis 66. Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board, 2006. This synthesis documents the state of the practice in fixed-route transit ridership forecasting and service planning. It identifies forecasting methodologies, resource requirements, data inputs, and organizational issues. It also analyzes the impacts of service changes and reviews transit agency assessments of the effectiveness and reliability of their methods and of desired improvements. This report will be of interest to transit planners and managers as they develop and refine forecasting methodologies for their own agencies. [Download](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_syn_66.pdf) at: http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/tcrp/tcrp_syn_66.pdf

Guidebook for Attracting Paratransit Patrons to Fixed-Route Services, TCRP Report 24, Washington, D.C.: Transportation Research Board, 1997. This report identifies the characteristics of paratransit riders with and without disabilities who could be attracted to ride fixed-route service, the features they value in fixed-route services, and the physical and institutional barriers that hinder such efforts. [Download](http://trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=2592) at http://trb.org/news/blurbs_detail.asp?id=2592

Joint Information Center Model: Collaborative Communications During Emergency Response. 2000. [Download](http://www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/$File/JIC.pdf?OpenElement) at [http://www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/\\$File/JIC.pdf?OpenElement](http://www.nrt.org/production/NRT/NRTWeb.nsf/AllAttachmentsByTitle/A-55JIC/$File/JIC.pdf?OpenElement)

Application For Long Term Technical Assistance. Community Transportation Association of America Rural Passenger Transportation Technical Assistance Program. Deadline for Technical Assistance Requests, January 9, 2008. [Download](http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/M-RPTAPPO8.doc) application from <http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/M-RPTAPPO8.doc> or Send hard copy

Communications 101: Dealing with the Media. Community Transportation Association of America, 1999. [Download](http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/ct/expo99/Communications101.pdf) at: <http://www.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/ct/expo99/Communications101.pdf>, or Send hard copy

Clean, Sober and Safe: An Employee Drug Awareness Training Video and Handbook. This employee drug awareness video begins by describing the incidents that led to the requirement of drug and alcohol testing in mass transit. The viewer is educated on the detrimental effects that the five prohibited drugs and alcohol can have on the mind and body and gives an overview of the drug and alcohol testing program. [Download](http://www.cutr.usf.edu/byrnessamsite/video.html) at <http://www.cutr.usf.edu/byrnessamsite/video.html> or Send video on CD, with handbook

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Kansas Trans Reporter

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

The *Kansas Trans Reporter* is co-sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Kansas Department of Transportation. The purposes of the 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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Address incorrect? Send us the inside form with your corrected address, or fax your changes to 785/864-3199.

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

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

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

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