

FEATURE

Putting Stimulus Funding to Work

By John Elias

How the ARRA helped rural transit agencies in Kansas.



Delivering transit in spread-out rural areas strains the budgets of transit agencies. With investment from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) transit providers across Kansas received significant investments in their agencies and have high hopes about new and expanded services they can offer. Rural transit providers in Kansas received almost \$7.5 Million in ARRA funds for capital improvements (see sidebar on page 2). Many will use those funds toward dispatch software and facilities expansion to aid regional coordination of service across counties in KDOT pilot programs (see article below) while others have used stimulus funds to add to their bus fleets. Lyon County Area Transit received funding to add facilities, dispatching and a new 20 passenger van, and officials there are excited about the opportunity to improve service in and around Emporia.

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FEATURE

Transit Coordination in Kansas

By John Elias

Regional transit coordination to improve service and efficiency across the state is taking shape through the efforts of local providers, elected officials, KDOT and other stakeholders. This past

summer kicked off the first two pilots with Breakthrough Teams in North Central Kansas and the Flint Hills region (see box on page 3). The Breakthrough Teams began work under leadership of Lisa Koch, Transit Manager of the Kansas DOT Office of Public Transportation and facilitated by Joel Wright and Kathleen Harnish-Doucet of TeamTech, Inc., founders and project managers of the Kansas Collaborative. Initially teams worked to determine

the need for transit in each region and built relationships with agencies and stakeholders across the region. The teams have now moved to the next steps: creating business and financing models for transit coordination that will best fit each region and preparing to use new dispatching software in two pilot projects. In Fall 2009 the Kansas Collaborative added a third pilot in Southwest Kansas,

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Making transit visible

Ken Barrows, Lyon County Area Transit Manager, learned that ARRA funding isn't just for big commuter rail projects between St. Louis and Chicago. He was surprised to get a call from KDOT that ARRA funding was available.

"They said that the funding was for us too, and asked 'What do you want?'" Barrows said. In response, he put together his "wish list" that included a new bus, bus shelters and signs, as well as dispatch software and Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled Mobile Data Terminals (MDT) for his buses. Lyon County Area Transit operates two deviated fixed routes in Emporia and demand response routes across Lyon County. With his ARRA grant Barrows will add 20 bus shelters and 36 bus signs featuring permanent schedules along the East and West fixed routes in addition to Trapeze™ Dispatch Software and those GPS-enabled MDTs.

Barrows is excited about the increases in efficiency and coordination the dispatch software and MDTs will bring. "We'll be able to make sure the buses are in the right place at the right time, and Trapeze™ Software, I'm told, can save up to 10 percent on fuel costs."

Ten transit systems in Kansas received almost \$7.5 million in funding for new vehicles and equipment and route software, with the aim of reaching more customers and increasing efficiency.

Aside from his efficiency expectations, the biggest benefit for Barrows is increased visibility. With new shelters and signs marking the routes and another bus on the streets, the public is bound to take notice. "Once we get the shelters in place, people in town will realize we have general public transit available. I think ridership will increase 100 percent," Barrows said.

Preparing for next time

When asked what he would do if another round of stimulus funding were approved, Barrows has a ready answer. Lyon County Area Transit is putting together plans for a maintenance facility that could help facilitate coordinated service across the region.

Barrows is very glad he got KDOT's call about the availability of ARRA funding. "I am very happy to have the ARRA funding and the shelters and signs. With those we can provide more service to the area."

If you would like to know how your agency can prepare for a possible second round of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding contact Lisa Koch, KDOT Public Transportation Manager, at Lisak@ksdot.org or call (785) 296-4907.

Recipients of ARRA Funding for Transit Projects in Kansas, 2009

Grantee	Project	Amount
Johnson County Transit - Rural Johnson County	Passenger buses and equipment	\$130,000
Leavenworth County	Passenger bus	\$50,488
Nemaha County Transit	2 ADA-equipped minivans	\$50,512
Riley County ATA	5 fixed route-equipped passenger buses, dispatching software, 11 mobile data terminals, stops and shelters, maintenance facility	\$2,484,025
Lyon County Area Transit	Stops and shelters, passenger van, dispatch software, radios and 11 mobile data terminals	\$361,087
OCCK - Salina	5 fixed route-equipped passenger buses, dispatching software, 11 mobile data terminals, stops and shelters, annex facility renovation, shop equipment (security locks, shop equipment, diagnostic vehicle scanner, data processing)	\$1,025,900
DSNWK - Hays	ADA-equipped passenger bus, mobile data terminals	\$95,884
Reno County Area Transit	2 fixed route-equipped passenger buses, 2 ADA-equipped minivans, 18 mobile data terminals	\$272,650
Sunflower Diversified Services - Great Bend	3 ADA-equipped passenger buses	
Finney County Transit	12 fixed route-equipped passenger buses, stops and shelters, facility addition and facility sprinkler system	\$755,040

Transit coordination in Kansas *Continued from page 1*

Kansas Transit Coordination Breakthrough Teams, by County		
Flint Hills	North Central	Southwest
Clay	Cloud	Clark
Dickinson	Dickinson	Kearny
Ft. Riley	Ellsworth	Finney
Gearly	Lincoln	Lane
Morris	McPherson	Ford
Pottawatomie	Mitchell	Meade
	Ottawa	Grant
	Republic	Morton
	Saline	Gray
		Ness
		Greeley
		Scott
		Hamilton
		Seward
		Haskell
		Stanton
		Hodgeman
		Stevens
		Wichita

and that new Breakthrough Team has progressed on a similar path.

Establishing need

During their initial meetings, the Breakthrough Teams examined the market for transit in the pilot region. With assistance from the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), the teams analyzed their regional transit market to determine commuter patterns. Layered maps from the KU Transportation Center showed demographics and revealed key trip generators in the region such as

medical, educational, human service and employment attractors for transit service.

Kansas RTAP also produced fact sheets detailing the benefits of mobility management solutions and regional coordination and case studies of successful regional coordination programs in rural Iowa and Illinois.

In addition, Kansas RTAP produced two information films about the benefits of regional coordination and mobility management opportunities (more information in the sidebar below).

Building relationships

Through Fall 2009 the North Central and Flint Hills Breakthrough Teams defined the scope and coverage of each transit provider in the region, developed an inventory of resources and examined how all the different providers in each region could fit together. Teams paid special attention during this time to working out relationships between service providers and examining models to best link a wide variety of transit agencies across large areas in multiple counties.

The Kansas Collaborative reached out to Rose Lee of Iowa and Bill Jung of Illinois, who were identified in Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet case studies, for expertise in developing and delivering regional coordination across large multi-county rural areas. Lee brought experience and success coordinating transit in two different regional coordination agencies in Iowa. Jung's Rides Mass Transit, serving 13 counties in southern Illinois, has successfully coordinated transit in rural Illinois for decades.

Anne Smith, director of aTa Bus in Riley County, was encouraged by the advice from Lee and Jung; it showed that new opportunities for Kansas providers have worked in other Midwestern states.

The Kansas Breakthrough Teams

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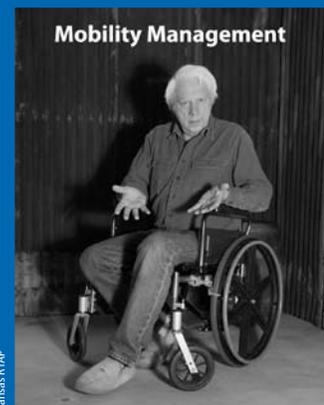
New Films Show Benefits of Coordination

In addition to data analysis of travel patterns and the demographic landscape in pilot areas, Kansas RTAP produced two educational films describing the benefits of mobility management and regional transit coordination.

▶ The **mobility management film** describes how a dedicated mobility manager can determine a community's need for specific transportation solutions and find innovative solutions to local problems. View the film on the Kansas RTAP Web site at <http://www.ksrtap.org>. Look under "What's New" or click on Downloads and go to the Fact Sheets area.



◀ The **regional transit coordination film** details the advantages communities can gain from coordinating transit solutions increasing efficiency, pooling resources and marketing and establishing a recognizable transit brand. View the film on the Kansas RTAP Web site at <http://www.ksrtap.org>. Look under "What's New" or click on the Downloads link and go to the Fact Sheets area.



Transit coordination *Continued from page 3*

incorporated this expert advice into their deliberations on delivery models, budgets and coordination and forged ahead to build links with neighboring providers.

Kathy Luthi, Ottawa County Commissioner, is excited to work with providers in neighboring Saline County. Providers in each of these counties cross into the other to serve riders' needs; coordinating rides with dispatching software will enable both counties to serve their customers better.

Next steps

In the coming months the Flint Hills and North Central Breakthrough Teams will continue to move toward

their coordination goal. Teams expect to determine which agencies will participate in the initial stages and also determine the scope of that participation. Final agreements on budget and income-sharing, dispatch coordination, nodes of service and a host of other operation details will be worked out over the next several weeks. The North Central and Flint Hills pilots will soon receive training on the Trapeze™ dispatch software and begin using it to schedule rides in May 2010, with plans to expand to other counties in the succeeding months.

In the end, regional coordination will feature agencies working with advisory boards with representatives from every

county so that everyone has a voice in providing the most efficient and highest quality service for the residents of each county. Luthi believes that early successes in the North Central Team's pilot will encourage other counties across the state to coordinate dispatching and service.

Through hard work and cooperation the Kansas Breakthrough Teams have taken important steps toward a new vision for transit across Kansas. Smith has no doubts regional coordination will succeed. "It has to," she said. "We have a new road to travel but one that will reap many benefits for transit in Kansas." ●

MANAGEMENT

Sharing the Risk, Sharing the Cost of Coverage

By Nicholas Pappas and Pat Weaver

Insurance risk retention pool or purchasing group...Can either option save you money?



There is risk in every endeavor, and transit services are no exception. Whether loading and unloading passengers, maneuvering through traffic, or encountering a difficult or dangerous passenger, there are strategies your agency can take to manage risk. In the risk management world, these strategies typically are categorized into four categories: transferring the risk (e.g., your typical insurance policy), avoiding the risk, reducing the negative effect of the risk, and/or accepting some or all of the consequences of a particular

risk. Over the years, transit agencies have been subject to wide variations in availability and cost of insurance. This "hard" insurance market gave birth to insurance pools or other organizational mechanisms starting in the 1980s to help agencies contain costs (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2008). This article reviews a couple of options that help reduce the negative effect of the risk, i.e., reduce the cost of coverage, through a couple of management strategies: risk retention pools or risk purchasing groups.

Risk retention pool or risk purchasing group: what's the difference?

Unlike private insurance, where your agency would purchase insurance from a private entity, or self insurance,

where your agency sets aside its own funds to pay for accidents and other claims, risk retention pools allow multiple agencies to form an agreement to share costs. In Kansas, a risk retention group is a corporation which is chartered and licensed as a liability insurance company. Agencies participating agree to contribute to a common risk pool that is used to pay for expenses arising from claims and accidents. Generally, there is a deductible required of an agency new to the pool. However, once benefits start, costs are distributed evenly across participating agencies.

In Kansas, establishing a risk retention group pool is subject to the requirements of establishing and registering an insurance company in Kansas, according to Pete Tavares, Jr., Fire & Casualty

Risk Retention Pool or Risk Purchasing Group?

Unlike private insurance, where your agency would purchase insurance from a private entity, or self insurance, where your agency would need to set aside its own funds to pay for accidents and other claims, **risk retention pools** allow multiple agencies to establish a corporation to share costs. **Risk purchasing groups** are formed for the purpose of purchasing *commercial* liability insurance for its members.

Policy Examiner for the Kansas Insurance Department, A risk purchasing group, on the other hand, is defined by the Federal Risk Retention Act of 1986 and Kansas statutes as a group that has as one of its primary purposes the purchase of *commercial* liability insurance (on a group basis and which purchases insurance) only for its group members to cover their similar liability exposure. (Section § 3901, 5. (A)(B)(C) & (D) of the Liability Risk and Retention Act 1986, & K.S.A. 40-4101, (j) (1), (2), (3) & (4)). According to Tavares, a risk purchase group may be easier to establish in the State of Kansas. In either case, the coverage under a risk retention pool or purchasing group is currently limited to commercial liability and excludes commercial property coverage.

Benefits of pools

What is the benefit of joining a risk retention pool? First, there is the benefit of reduced costs. Typically with private insurance, deductibles pay, in part, fees to the insurance company. Under a risk retention pool, these “middle-man” costs are avoided. Any money that is contributed is shared among the participating agencies.

Second is the benefit of stability. With private insurers, costs can be volatile depending on economic conditions, and deductibles may be arbitrarily set. In addition, coverage (typically general/auto liability) may change from one term to the next. With risk retention pools,

coverage remains the same (or is at least agreed-upon by participating agencies). Contributions are preset and established at the outset.

Third is the benefit of accessibility. The availability of risk retention pools is fairly high; however, pools are not universally available in all parts of the country and depend on registration with the respective state insurance departments. (Check with your state insurance department to determine the status of a particular pool.) In addition, pools can set their own tolerance limits, which are often more lenient than private insurers. This can allow agencies that might not otherwise be able to afford private insurance to participate in a risk retention pool.

Drawbacks to participating in a risk retention pool

Overhead costs are higher with pools than they are with individual self-insurance. However, the cost stability is greater as well.

The second drawback may be claims handling. While there is certainly more control in risk retention pools than with a private insurer, no form of risk management parallels self-insurers in this regard.

A third drawback is that of start-up costs associated with conducting a feasibility study, including collecting insurance data and risk information from agencies wanting to participate. The costs for this can add up and are sometimes difficult to fund at the outset of a program. If your agency

Tips for Getting Started

- Make sure you are a good risk with safety protocols in place; e.g., vehicle safety inspections, driver training, driver records, and drug and alcohol testing.
- Talk to other agencies—other transit agencies in the state and your state transit association. Determine if there is one strategy that would work best for the group.
- Conduct a feasibility study for loss projections and financial analyses. A feasibility study is required of a risk retention group, but not necessarily to establish a risk purchasing group (check with your State Insurance Department).
- Collaborate with the State Insurance Department and with your State DOT to ensure that you meet all requirements.
- Recruit. If a risk retention pool or risk purchasing group is established, participation is key.

joins an established risk retention pool, some of this disadvantage is mitigated.

Examples of risk retention pools and purchasing groups

Two notable and successful risk retention pools—Washington State Transit Insurance Pool (WSTIP) and California Transit Insurance Pool (CalTIP)—are good examples of how a pool can be started. With WSTIP, eight transit agencies joined forces in 1989 to form a self-funded liability-only insurance pool. The initial combined premium paid by the agencies was \$1.2 million, which provided \$10 million worth of liability coverage with no deductibles. Today, WSTIP insures 24 agencies and provides a variety of insurance services to its members. With an annual budget of \$9.4 million, WSTIP has been able to add

administrative staff to manage claims and member services.

Similar to WSTIP, CalTIP has also been successful in forming a risk retention pool. Started in 1987, CalTIP initially covered 12 agencies, offering many of the same benefits as WSTIP—control over program operation, costs, and services; stability of insurance premiums; availability of desired coverages; and bundled services. Since the 1980s, CalTIP has added a vehicle physical damage program and has grown to insure 35 agencies.

An example of a risk purchasing group is the Community Transportation Insurance Program (CTIP), an endorsed association captive insurance company. An association captive is an insurance entity that is owned and governed by its

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Sources

- Insurance and Risk Management Solutions: Risk Retention Pools. National RTAP Fact Sheet. Available online at http://www.linkingcommunities.com/user_media/23608/insurance%20and%20risk%20management.pdf
- Insurance Department, April 14, 2010.
- Website accessed on April 15, 2010, CTA Community Transportation Insurance Program, <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=805>
- Insurance Challenges for Paratransit, National Conference of State Legislatures, October 2008. <http://www.ncsl.org/print/transportation/insurancebrief1008.pdf>

Sharing the risk *Continued from page 5*

member-insureds. Members of CTIP will be members of the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) and service-providers for public and community

transportation services. More information about the CTIP is available at the CTAA web site (<http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=805>).

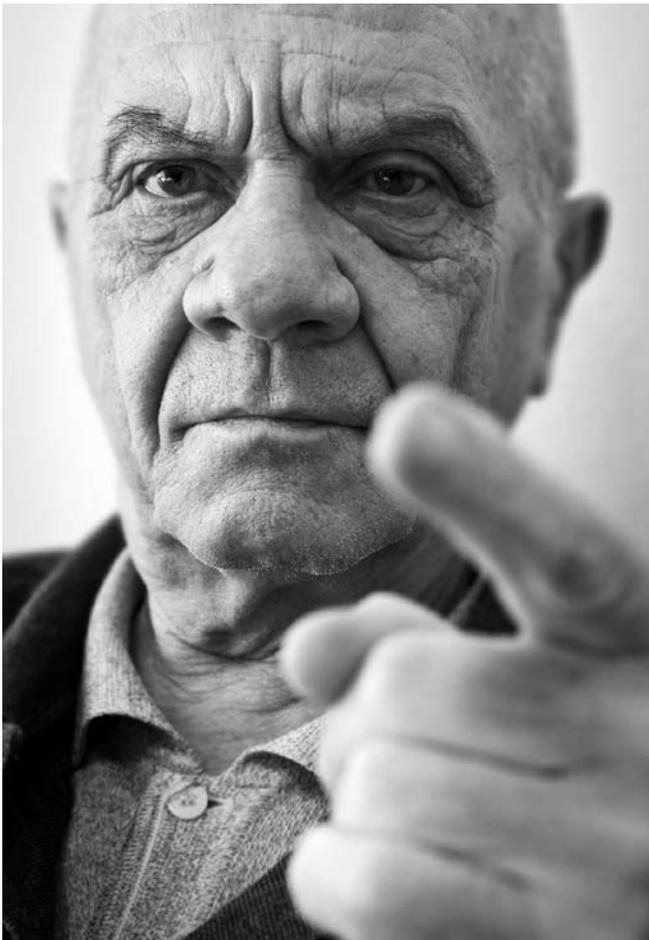
A risk retention pool or risk purchasing group can be an effective way to help manage risk in your agency, but have both merits and pitfalls. If you have questions about what

options are available to you in Kansas, contact Pete Tavares, Jr., Fire & Casualty Policy Examiner, Kansas Insurance Department 785-296-7832, ptavares@ksinsurance.org. •

MANAGEMENT

Customer Conflicts and You

By Nicholas Pappas



istockphoto.com

Take the Higher Road

A common situation you may encounter is a rider who disobeys rules, whether the rules pertain to food and beverage consumption, smoking, noise, or other nuisances. In a situation like this, it is important to address the problem early. Then, choose one of the three common ways to address the situation:

- Validate the situation—let your customer know that you heard what she or he said. Validating feelings can help make your customer feel understood and can help win him or her over.
- Give choices and consequences—list the choices available to your customer, such as, for example, continuing smoking on the street or putting the cigarette out and taking a seat. The customer gets to make the choice, which puts him or her in a position of power and can diffuse the conflict.
- Agree—by siding with your customer and telling him or her that you don't agree with the rules either but are still required to follow them, you may surprise your customer and diffuse the situation. Your customer may forget he/she was angry!

It is rare to find a transit driver who hasn't encountered a difficult (and in some cases, damaging) situation with a passenger. Conflict resolution is a tool for you—a process that allows you to work out differences with your passengers before a situation escalates to a more difficult or dangerous encounter.

There are a variety of ways to deal with a situation:

avoidance, confrontation, and problem solving. Conflict resolution addresses a situation through problem-solving techniques, including assessing your own behavior, identifying current and potential problem situations, and implementing specific conflict management skills to address these situations. Taken together, these techniques provide an effective way to communicate with passengers

to avoid conflict and create a positive transit experience for everyone on board.

Self-assessment tools

According to the National Transit Institute's guide *Customer, Conflicts and You: A Transit Operator's Guide to Problem-Solving*, communication is an essential component in the transit industry, especially in how you convey your attitude and thinking toward your customers.

First, greeting your customers is one of the most important things you can do as a driver. It allows you to set the tone on your bus. You can start with a smile, a simple nod of your head, or saying hello. However, it is important to try to greet all customers the same way and to speak in a clear, friendly tone.

Second, it is important to have an open, receptive body posture when welcoming riders onto the transit vehicle. You will appear interested in helping them. Further, it can give you a chance to see who is coming on board and if they may need any assistance.

Third, it is important to have eye contact with your customers as they board. It lets you acknowledge your customers, lets them know you are watching what's happening on your bus, and helps you to spot any clues that might let you know of a situation to watch out for. However, you should avoid staring at your customers so as to avoid provoking a negative reaction.

Potential problem situations

In addition to assessing your own demeanor, it is also important to identify potential problem situations before they develop. First, there are situational problems that can occur when a bus is at passenger capacity. For example, customers with packages can take up more space and anger others; customers who are sick can cause general concern; and some customers can become suspicious when they are around people they don't know. In addition, when the bus nears capacity, it is typically during a busy time of day. Some passengers may be in a hurry and get angry when the bus is in traffic.

Some problems can occur at any time. For example, certain customers may make others feel uneasy. Whether a person is acting erratic, seems to have a personal problem, or is in situation that is out of their control (such as having a crying baby on board), other customers will likely feel bothered. In addition, unsupervised teenagers or children who may be riding can pose a potential problem since these

Some passengers can “look like trouble” when they are not. It is very important to not stereotype. A problem can be caused by anyone. Further, clues to problem situations can sometimes be misinterpreted.

passengers tend to follow rules less often.

Some passengers can “look like trouble” when they are not. It is very important to not stereotype. A problem can be caused by anyone. Further, clues to problem situations can sometimes be misinterpreted. The bottom line is to stay alert and be aware of your riders, treating them with respect regardless of how they look to you. By identifying potential trouble—such as a mentally unstable passenger, someone who doesn't observe the rules, or large groups of teenagers—you will be able to act if something develops into a problem.

Conflict management skills

What you say and how you say it can affect what happens on your vehicle. In normal circumstances, a conflict between you and a passenger can be handled by either politely ending the conversation, pausing either before or after you speak, or by using humor to diffuse the situation. Each technique should be considered based on the situation at hand. Further, humor should be used only if you are comfortable doing so and can reasonably ensure that the customer will get the joke.

In situations when you are dealing with someone with a mental disorder or someone who might be a substance abuser, it is important to either give a directive, set limits, or give choices and their consequences. Ultimately, it is important to recognize these situations and use the following communication skills:

- Don't embarrass or humiliate your customer,
- Speak clearly and calmly,
- Use repetition,
- Don't intimidate the person,
- Don't be surprised if they overreact, and
- Treat every passenger with the same respect you treat your other customers.

In every circumstance, it is important to not be confrontational. Instead, in arguments, you should validate the customer's concern, give choices and consequences for certain actions, and even agree with what is being said if it will help diffuse a situation from occurring. Although you cannot control others, you can have an impact on them and reduce the risk that a problem will escalate.

Source

- *Customers, Conflicts and You: A Transit Operator's Guide to Problem-Solving*. 2000. Guide and movie. National Transit Institute.

Advertising on Buses

By Erik Berg

Here's a way to generate some revenue and help local businesses at the same time.

Transit vehicles are designed to make money while carrying paying passengers, but thanks to a basic set of brackets and placards, buses in Lyon County, Kansas make money even when standing still.

Lyon County Area Transportation (L-CAT) is one of hundreds of transit providers throughout the country turning more and more to advertising to supplement revenue and pay for needed improvements in these tough economic times.

"It's worth it (to sell bus advertising)," said Ken Barrows of L-CAT, "Everybody is looking for ways to make extra money, and this is a good way. We've been doing it since 2002, and I don't see us ever stopping."

Any transit provider can sell advertising space on their vehicles, whether a major transit system with hundreds of vehicles, or a small operation with one or two vans. The process can be a minor investment in time and money, but with guidelines from the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP), and the proven results of agencies like L-CAT, advertising sales can be well worth it for the rural and small town transit provider.

Guidelines re: advertising sales

The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) published a report titled *Synthesis 51: Transit Advertising*



Ad revenue at L-CAT in Emporia has paid for driver training, uniforms; and will even help support a new route.

Sales Agreements in 2004 to determine how successful transit advertising efforts are across the country, and as a best-practices guide for providers. TCRP found that of the agencies surveyed, 95 percent sold bus advertising and 79 percent sold interior car card ads. Agencies sold a variety of advertising space, including front, side and tail spaces, interior car cards; vinyl full vehicle wraps and side wraps; and on bus shelters and in system brochures.

Most lucrative for transit agencies were the full-vehicle wraps, which on average were sold to businesses for 5 to 10 times the amount of the relatively smaller "king" size spaces (30 in by 144 in, mounted on the sides of vehicles).

Smaller agencies typically sold ads in-house, while those in medium and large media markets typically

contracted out ad sales. 30 percent of agencies surveyed reserved space for public service announcements (PSAs).

According to the TCRP Report, advertising rates and the amount of revenue generated vary based on the size of the transit agency's media market. For agencies in smaller markets, the rate for a king-size advertisement ranged from \$100 to \$300 each per month. Tail advertisements averaged 75 percent to 85 percent of kings, and interior advertisements ran for approximately one-tenth the rate of kings.

Successful transit advertising programs brought amounts equal to only 1.5 percent of total operating funds on average, but amounts still significant in dollar terms. Well-organized advertising programs operate by a

Sources

- TCRP Synthesis 51: Transit Advertising Sales Agreements, 2004, Transportation Research Board: Washington, DC.
- Tri-County Link Advertising: <http://www.ridetricountylink.com/advertiseWithUs.html>
- Lower Rio Grand Valley, <http://www.lrgvdc.org/downloads/transportation/lrgvdc-transit-advertising-proposal.pdf>
- ThomasNet, <http://www.thomasnet.com/products/sign-brackets-7721400-1.html>
- LetterBank, <http://letterbank.com/transit.htm>

written advertising policy that includes a statement of purpose, limitations on advertising, and a carefully-prepared review and approval process.

Advertising efforts in Emporia

When Ken Barrows came to Emporia to work for L-CAT in 2002, money was so tight the agency couldn't afford driver training, so he turned to advertising. He first went door-to-door to local business owners to gauge their interest in advertising on the bus. "There was a big interest," said Burrows, "So we made a small investment; we purchased \$600 exterior sign racks for the buses."

L-CAT decided what sort of advertising it would not allow, including signs for tobacco products and adult businesses, and determined that advertising businesses would pay for the signs on a monthly or yearly basis.

L-CAT used the new ad revenue to pay for driver training and proper uniforms, and is now planning to use a portion of the revenue stream to temporarily fund a new route (made possible through an ARRA grant to purchase a new vehicle) until more conventional federal funding can be



Bettendorf Transit

Bettendorf, a very small system (5 routes, 6 buses), has found that by cutting out the middle man of an advertising agency (i.e. working directly with potential advertisers, contracting directly with a graphics company for sign production, and in-house sign application), they can realize a tidy sum in advertising revenue that is largely profit. Above is one of their buses. As transit agencies look for ways to increase cash flow, a decision to offer advertising on fleet buses can be a relatively simple, low-maintenance tactic.

secured. The only challenges they have faced with this kind of advertising are finding better ways to secure signs (solved with a simple visit to the local hardware store), and keeping the vehicles and signs clean so they can be read. Burrows and L-CAT are satisfied with their results, and plan to include advertising space on new bus shelters to be installed.

Rural transit advertising around the United States: A few examples

Bus advertising such as that adopted by L-CAT has played out in small towns

and rural communities throughout the country, and has generally met with success. The Tri-County Link, transit provider for Berkley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties in South Carolina, touts as advantages the greater reach and frequency of transit advertising, as well as brand recognition for products and services, daily exposure, and having a captive audience in passengers, pedestrians, and fellow motorists.

The Lower Rio Grande Valley Development Council (LRGVDC) of South Texas links 10 US-Mexican border towns with transit, and offers everything from interior car cards to full wraps for its 25 ft and 30 ft buses. A full bus wrap, (both sides and the rear of the vehicle) yields \$1,200 per month plus an installation fee. LRGVDC also sells advertising in packages for interior spaces and brochures.

Ken Barrows of Lyon County Area Transit needs no convincing from national examples like these; he has already seen the results in Emporia.

"We have more (businesses) that want ads than we have advertising space," he said, "We still have businesses from that original group of advertisers that continue to advertise. It does work!"

For more information about bus advertising, please visit the sources for this article listed on page 8.

Upcoming Workshop: Planning for Agency Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness

June 22, 2010 — Salina, Kansas

This orientation workshop provides information to transit managers about the FTA safety and security program which supports developing high quality safety and security programs in rural and small urban transportation systems. The focus of the workshop is to assist agency managers to:

- Understand the FTA Transit Bus Safety and Security Program,
- Identify elements of Safety and Security Excellence, perform an assessment of safety and security program,
- Identify gaps, needs, and best practices,
- Create a plan to achieve safety and security excellence, and
- Use the new FTA Safety and Security Web site and understand how it can save time and money.

This course will be taught by Ream Lazaro, Senior Consultant, Boyd, Caton & Grant Transportation Group, Inc. Register at <http://www.ksrtap.org> (click on "View the RTAP Calendar"). Don't miss this excellent opportunity! Space is limited so register early. For more information, please call Pat Weaver at 785-864-2595.

Railroad Crossing Safety Tips

By Matthew Barnett

According to the Federal Railroad Administration Office of Safety Analysis there were 10,529 accidents/incidents on railroads in 2009, 666 of which ended in fatalities. It's a staggering number that can be reduced by practicing proper safety habits when crossing a highway-rail in your community.

Driver tips:

Here's some advice for anyone approaching a highway-rail crossing.

- As you approach the crossing, slow down and test your brakes.
- Check crossing signals before crossing.
- Scan your surroundings and check for any traffic around you (including behind you), and signal your intentions.
- If you stop at rail crossings, the rear of your vehicle should be labeled to indicate that information. If possible, pull over slightly to the right in your lane and turn on your emergency flashers.
- Do not stop any closer than 15 feet from the nearest rail. Stopping between 15 and 50 feet gives you the best view of the tracks.
- Look beyond the crossing to see if there is any traffic congestion, a traffic signal or a stop sign. Then ask yourself, "Is the containment area large enough to allow my bus to completely clear the crossing if I have to stop on the other side? Be certain.
- If at a stop before the crossing, press down on the service brake or set the parking brake while you wait.
- Turn off any noisy equipment, and ask your passengers to briefly stop talking; doing this allows you to listen for a train coming before crossing.
- It's not Kansas law to open a service door and driver's window to listen for



the train, but if your agency allows it, then use that practice to scan for any approaching train.

- Only stop before the first track on any multiple track crossings, and only when you are sure no train is approaching on any of the tracks.
- If you have a standard transmission, do not change gears while crossing railroad tracks.

Special procedures

Sometimes at crossings there are special circumstances, and you should know how to handle them. When a police officer or flagger is at the crossing, obey his or her directions. If there is not a properly-identified flagger and the signals are malfunctioning, call your dispatcher to report the situation and find out how to proceed. Some crossings display an 800 number for reporting problems.

If you have an obstructed view of the tracks, then you should not attempt to

cross them unless you can see far enough down the track that no trains are approaching. Be especially careful at "passive" crossings without gates, flashing lights or bells. But, it's always a good idea to look and listen before crossing, even if there are active signals that indicate the tracks are clear. If you have a choice of locations to cross, try to plan your route so that it provides the maximum sight distance at any highway-rail grade crossing.

Traffic containment and storage areas are another safety concern. If your bus won't fit, don't commit. You should know the length of the bus you're driving every day and the size of the containment area at highway-rail intersections on your route. When you approach a crossing with a traffic signal or stop sign on the other side of the tracks, you should pay special attention to the amount of room on the other side. Be certain the bus has enough storage area to clear the tracks completely in case you have to stop.

Every operator should know the evacuation procedures for their bus. If the bus stalls or becomes trapped on the tracks you should evacuate immediately. Have everyone get off the bus and move far away from the tracks, diagonally away from the bus, in the direction of the approaching train, so that any debris from a collision will be moving away from you.

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Texting and (Distracted) Driving

By Matthew Barnett

New policy prohibits texting and driving for interstate carriers.

On January 26, 2010, U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced the prohibition of texting while driving for commercial interstate vehicles, effective immediately. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), led by Administrator Anne Ferro, implemented this policy for interstate drivers who carry cargo for a living, and also for passenger vans and buses.

Any device that takes a driver's attention off the road is considered a risk to the safety of all drivers. "We're simply sending a message: When we advise drivers to share the road responsibly, we mean it," said Ray LaHood,

Secretary of Transportation. After sponsoring the first summit on distracted driving, the FMCSA promised to send a clear message that texting while driving is a dangerous activity that must stop.

Research shows the risk

In a study done at Virginia Tech, it was found that truck drivers who send a text message on a cell phone are about 23 times more likely to get into some type of crash or near-miss situation than drivers who keep their eyes on the road and off their phones or electronic devices.

In an analogy used by Ray LaHood during the press conference, he said, "Drivers texting take their eyes off the road nearly five seconds per message. Close your eyes and count slowly to five. Imagine a truck or bus traveling the length of a football field plus its end zones – unattended.

Imagine what can happen with a large truck or busload of passengers in that time. And then thank Anne Ferro and the FMCSA for trying to prevent it."

National spotlight on this issue

There is a large national push for distracted driving to come to a stop. With President Obama signing an Executive Order directing federal employees not to engage in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles or with government-owned equipment, the federal government's stand is clear. In fact, Ray LaHood announced the launch of the first non-profit organization dedicated to stopping distracted driving, FocusDriven. This and other organizations and Web sites, like <http://www.distraction.gov>, are helping to spread the word and eliminate distracted driving all together. Even television celebrity

Oprah Winfrey has joined the cause. She asks her viewers and guests to sign a pledge to not use a phone while driving, for texting or otherwise. This message is part of almost every show she airs.

What your agency should do

So what does all this mean for your agency? There are a couple of things you should consider implementing right away. Adopt a written policy that prohibits texting and driving, and provide driver orientation for the new policy.

No tolerance

What's the penalty for violating the new distracted driving policy? An operator who violates these federal regulations is subject to a penalty up to \$2,750. More regulations may be on the way, too.

"In the months ahead, we'll propose additional legal remedies and develop new tools that will help us work alongside the law enforcement community, safety advocates, researchers, and others, to find new ways to raise awareness and bring an end to the terrible dangers posed by distracted driving," said LaHood. ●

What does this mean for your agency? If you are an interstate carrier, or even if you are not, adopt a written policy that prohibits texting and driving, and provide driver orientation to review the new policy.



Sources

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- Distraction.gov. U.S. Department of Transportation. Accessed March 1, 2010. <http://www.distraction.gov>

Fuels of the Future

By Erik Berg

Rural and small town transportation operators, like all vehicle owners, are looking at alternative fuel vehicles as a way to save money and improve the environment. Questions about fuel availability, maintenance costs associated with new technology, and vehicle costs linger for many providers, but one thing is clear: The future of rural transit belongs to hybrids and alternative fuel vehicles.

Harbinger of the future?

A vision of rural transit's future appeared at the 2010 Chicago Auto Show, coming in the innovative and compact package of the Ford Transit Connect vehicle. The Transit Connect offers the versatility of a full-size van and but the fuel efficiency of a minivan, and consumers will soon have a choice of alternative fuels. In Chicago, Ford displayed a Transit Connect Taxi and three alternative fuel versions; a plug-in electric edition, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), and Liquefied Petroleum



This bus is an alternative fuels test vehicle, powered by soybean-derived biofuel.

Gas (LPG, propane) versions.

Ford's choice of alternative fuel versions is significant; hybrid electric and plug in electric vehicles and those powered by CNG and LPG are some of the most popular power sources on the market. In the world of alternative fuel vehicles, choice is the name of the game.

Alternative fuels

For rural transit providers, more investment in alternative fuel vehicles by major manufacturers like Ford opens possibilities in cost savings and choice. So many choices exist that the

US Department of Energy created the Alternative Fuels and Advanced Vehicles Data Center (AFDC) as a guide (http://www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/search_options.html).

According to the AFDC, several alternative fuels and power sources predominate, described below:

Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), which are growing in popularity as automobiles, combine an internal combustion engine

(ICE) with a battery pack. An HEV uses electricity to power the vehicle from a dead stop, and engages the ICE to power the vehicle once it is up to speed, and to regenerate the batteries.

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are run strictly by batteries, and derive their power either from an on-board source (such as a small ICE) or by plugging into the power grid when the vehicle is parked.

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicles are similar to HEVs and EVs in that they ultimately drive the vehicle using electricity; on-board fuel cells store hydrogen and convert it into electricity, with water vapor left over as the only emission from the process. Vehicle performance and refueling of fuel cell vehicles is similar to that of the ICE, but hydrogen infrastructure to support these vehicles is still at an early stage.

Natural Gas and Propane Vehicles have special ICEs designed to run on the fuels, and in general produce lower emissions than gasoline or diesel engines with comparable performance. Natural Gas Vehicles can run off Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG). Propane vehicles also offer comparable performance to gas and diesel engines, have lower emissions, and have lower maintenance costs than most other

Vehicle and Fuel Technology Research at KU

A major research area of the Kansas University Transportation Research Institute is vehicle and alternative-fuel technologies. One effort, the KU Biofuels "Feedstock to Tailpipe®" Initiative, has created a multidisciplinary research team exploring alternative liquid fuels to power the country's transportation system. Scientists from chemical, mechanical, and environmental engineering, as well as ecology, biology, and geography are collaborating to address the future of a sustainable alternative liquid fuel. The Biodiesel Initiative focuses research on fuel sources from waste vegetable oil and soybean and sunflower oil to algae as a source to power our vehicles. Some of the vehicle technologies that have been investigated include inductively-charged electric buses and environmental assessments of plug-in hybrid electric buses technologies. Research at KU, and others like it, hopefully will lead to long-term feasibility of these new technologies to support sustainable transit and the rest of the transportation sector. *Source: <http://www.kutri.ku.edu/research/thrust-area.html>*

alternative fuel vehicles. Natural Gas and Propane Vehicles are also benefit from an established nationwide infrastructure, and an abundant domestic supply.

ULSD, Biodiesel, and Flex Fuel Vehicles are the most common alternative fuel vehicles. The AFDC reports that EPA-mandated ULSD vehicles are among the most fuel efficient vehicles in use, and biodiesel is a home-grown resource. Both types of diesel are cleaner-burning with lower emissions. ULSD and biodiesel can be used in standard vehicles without engine modifications. Flex Fuel vehicles are some of the most common, as many manufacturers already produce them alongside their standard vehicles. The key advantage is Flex Fuel Vehicles can run off unleaded gasoline or domestically produced- and lower emission-E85 Ethanol without engine modification.

Using the AFDC's Alternative Fueling Station Locator (<http://www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/locator/stations/>), it is clear that, in Kansas, E85 Ethanol and Propane are King. A search of the state revealed Propane and E85 are available at stations from metropolitan Kansas City to the Colorado border, with stations serving rural areas from the Central Nebraska border all the way to Liberal, KS.

Vehicles currently available

Vehicle manufacturers have noticed the interest in and growing availability of alternative fuels, and offer a growing variety of vehicles. An example common to many rural transit providers is the Ford E-450, a factory-built chassis often used for cut-away buses. The E-450 can be equipped with Flex Fuel E-85, diesel engines, and can be converted for propane.

Ford's Commercial Vehicle Division is also showcasing a new E-Series Hydrogen Internal Combustion Shuttle Bus demonstration vehicle.

Gillig Corporation markets its Hybrid Low Floor Clean Diesel-Electric bus, available in 30' length to service smaller and midsize communities.

Although neither the propane-ready Ford E-450, nor the Gillig Hybrid

Alternative Fuels & Rural Transit in Action

Research by the Texas Transportation Institute (Texas A&M University) and the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (North Dakota State University) indicate that alternative fuel vehicles can work for rural transit with the right information, resources, and coordination between federal and state agencies and local transit operators.

The Texas study found the major issues for the use of Alternative Fuel Vehicles in rural transit were higher costs per vehicle, vehicle range, scarcity and limited hours of operation of fueling stations, vehicle downtime, and Propane vehicle reliability issues relating to the training of maintenance workers. Solutions to these issues involved creating regional fuel sharing agreements between transit operators and Texas Department of Transportation Propane fueling stations, allowing providers to operated Ultra-Low Sulfur Diesel and Flex Fuel Vehicles for long range trips and during alternative fuel vehicle maintenance times, and sharing of regional maintenance facilities and proper training for workers.

Two separate studies by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute echoed the Texas study on several points, and found positive results for alternative fuel vehicles. The first study noted that prices for alternative fuel vehicles were two to three times higher than that of traditional vehicles, as well as the problem of proper maintenance and warranties for vehicles converted from traditional fuel to alternative fuel. It also discussed the need for coordinated purchasing guidelines between state transportation agencies and local providers, and noted that the growing popularity of hybrid technology will reduce vehicle costs. The second study found that the use of biodiesel by the Fargo-Moorhead Metro Area Transit agency led to higher fuel costs, but also led to a 5.2 percent drop in maintenance costs for fleet vehicles.

Low Floor, have been procured by the Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council to date, the Council would like to know if grantee service providers are interested in alternative vehicles. Kansas rural transit providers interested in procuring alternative fuel vehicles may contact Sarah Krom, chairperson of the Kansas Coordinated Transit District Council, at (620) 792-1321 or e-mail at sekrom@sunflowerdiv.com.

To learn more about alternative fuel vehicles and the possibilities for rural transit, visit the US Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels and Advanced Vehicles Data Center (AFDC) (http://www.afdc.energy.gov/afdc/search_options.html). For further information on vehicles mentioned here, visit the following sources for this article.

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- "Alternative Fuel Technologies—Ford Commercial Vehicles," Ford Commercial Vehicles Division, Ford Motor Company, <http://www.ford.com/vehicles/commercial-vehicles>

- "First Look: 2011 Ford Transit Connect Electric and Taxi – Electric, CNG, and LPG Power, but No Diesel Yet," Carlos Lago, Motor Trend, February 15, 2010 http://www.motortrend.com/auto_shows/chicago/2010/2011_ford_transit_connect_electric_and_taxi/index.html

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- "Alternative Fuel Vehicles at Small Urban and Rural Public Transportation Systems In Texas," Texas Transportation Institute for the Texas Department of Transportation, March 2007, <http://tti.tamu.edu/>

- Peterson, Del & Michael Molloy, "Advanced Small Vehicle Technology Study," Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, December 2007, <http://www.ugpti.org/>

- Peterson, Del & Jeremy Mattson, "Bio-Diesel Use in Fargo-Moorhead MAT Buses," Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, May 2008, <http://www.ugpti.org/>

Web Sites and Downloads of Interest

2008 Rural National Transit Database (NTD) Download

<http://www.answerscreen.com/TakeSurvey.asp?SurveyID=4KK8o4LLI78KG>. A complete copy of data submitted by each state on each rural transit agency (Section 5311 sub-recipient) in the country. This link is maintained by National RTAP. Follow the link provided above, or go to www.nationalrtap.org and click on the link provided on their home page.

Rides Change Lives

http://seniortransportation.easterseals.com/site/DocServer/Rides_Change_Lives.pdf?docID=103983. A 12-page booklet describing innovative approaches of eight Senior Transportation Demonstration Grantees, awarded in May 2008 by the National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST).

Coordination: It's the Law

<http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=1827>
Coordination is the efficient and effective use of transportation resources for getting people to important destinations, such as jobs and medical appointments. Coordination means working with transit providers, human service agencies, private institutions, businesses, volunteers and political leaders to broaden transportation options. This fact sheet details the legislative and regulatory requirements associated with transportation funding.

Transportation and Human Service Acronyms

<http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=1387&z=78>
A Web site providing several dozen acronyms related to transportation and human service.

Bettendorf 2010 On-Vehicle Rate Card and Discount Sheet

If you are considering on-vehicle advertising, Bettendorf Transit is sharing its rate card and discount sheet for "Moving Billboards" as a sample for pricing structure. <http://www.kstransit.org>, click on "Resources to Download," and go to the Marketing section. You can also order a hard copy from Kansas RTAP.

Online Conference on Accessible Transportation (August 2009) [CD]

Audio recordings and presentation materials for four sessions presented on August 3-6, 2009 for the Online Conference on Accessible Transportation. Topics include developing and implementing policies with the input of the disability community, the San Francisco paratransit taxi debit card system, the future of coordinated transportation and leadership during times of budget constraints. https://secure2.convio.net/es/site/Ecommerce/1510440084?VIEW_PRODUCT=true&product_id=6881&store_id=9663

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The *Kansas TransReporter* is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the Kansas University Transportation Center (KUTC), under the umbrella of KU's Transportation Research Institute. The newsletter is free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The *Kansas TransReporter* 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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Calendar

Rural Transit Training and Conferences

2010 KS RTAP Driver Training:

Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures

May 6 Dodge City
May 20 in Pratt
June 3 in El Dorado
June 10 in Independence
June 17 in Emporia
June 24 in McPherson
July 15 in Concordia
July 22 in Oakley
July 29 in Hays
August 12 in Olathe
August 19 in Atchison
September 2 in Manhattan
September 30 in Salina
October 7 in Garden City
Contact Kansas RTAP**

Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance Skills

August 5 in Topeka
August 26 in Ottawa
October 14 in Pittsburg
October 21 in Newton
Contact Kansas RTAP**

Additional Training:

CTAA Expo

May 23-28, 2010
Long Beach, CA
<http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=10309350-47f1-49f1-bca3-c4a762599118>

Planning for Agency Safety, Security and Emergency Preparedness

June 22, 2010
Salina, KS
Contact Kansas RTAP**

Kansas Public Transit Association

August 30 – September 1, 2010
Hutchinson, KS
Contact: Tuck Duncan, KPTA, <http://www.kstransit.org>

Advanced Mobility Device Securement Skills Development Workshop

September 21-22, 2010
Lawrence, KS
Contact Kansas RTAP**

**To register for a Kansas RTAP workshop, go to <http://www.ksrtap.org>. Click on "Register to attend." Questions? Contact Kristin Kelly at (785) 864-2594 or kbkelly@ku.edu.