

FEATURE



Lawrence Transit

Special Treatment for Local Specialized Agencies: Help With Maintenance Challenges

By Pat Weaver

Lawrence Transit and KU on Wheels developed an agreement for maintenance on specialized equipment for local human service transit agencies.

Complaints about a lack of convenient and quality maintenance expertise on lift-equipped, body-on-chassis vehicles is not unusual from rural and smaller human service transportation agencies outside of large metropolitan areas. These agencies often don't operate their own in-house maintenance and must contract out all their service. It's likely they

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FEATURE

Flint Hills ATA Considering Fixed-Route Service for Junction City

By Pat Weaver

Another rural community (less than 50,000 population) in Kansas may be moving to fixed route transit service if a feasibility study determines that the service is operationally and fiscally viable. Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency (ATA), with input from Geary County and the City of Junction City, is getting ready

to study whether a fixed route system would work for the City of Junction City and nearby Grandview Plaza. The KU Transportation Center will be assisting with this study, and they hope to have some answers by next spring.

Transit service in Junction City now

Flint Hills ATA has operated demand-response transit service in Junction City and Grandview Plaza in Geary County since 2011. The community support has been very good, and ridership has grown each year. The pilot program that began

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are not located near the original vehicle manufacturer, so authorized service for lifts, air conditioners, or other specialty equipment that might be installed on their vehicles is difficult to find.

Sometimes the problem is a long drive to get to an authorized dealer. Other times there's a long wait for service because smaller agencies are lower in priority. As a last resort, they may be forced to take the vehicle to a maintenance shop that just does not have knowledge about the specialized equipment on the vehicle. But what's the solution?

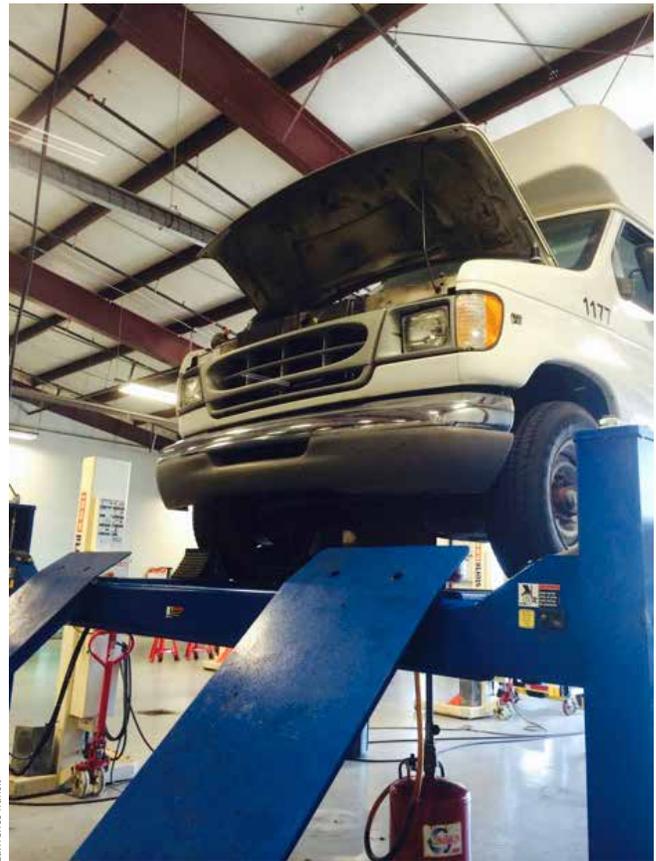
The Regional Transit Advisory Committee (RTAC) of the Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) found one. The Committee has developed a solution to problems that have plagued smaller agencies in Douglas County for many years. This article will describe a new coordinated approach, developed recently, intended to solve some of the common problems associated with access to qualified maintenance service on specialized transit vehicles.

Lawrence-Douglas County maintenance challenges

There are nine voting members of the Lawrence-Douglas County RTAC, including the City of Lawrence, the University of Kansas, and human service agency representatives from aging, housing, mental health, developmental disabilities and independent living—several of which are Section 5310 funding recipients. Complaints about maintenance problems were often heard at regular meetings of the RTAC.

“From the beginning of drafting our Coordinated Transit Plan (updated in 2012),” says Lawrence-Douglas County Transportation Planner Jessica Mortinger, “a solution to equipment maintenance woes for the smaller agencies was a priority.” According to Danny Kaiser, Transit Manager for KU on Wheels, “too often we heard of the difficulty they [smaller agencies] were having finding mechanics that were familiar enough with these specialized vehicles to help them.”

Douglas County Senior Services, Inc. Development Manager Tina Roberts described a specific problem they had been struggling with for four years. They have two 2010 Dodge Caravans purchased at the same time from an out-of-town manufacturer. They had repeated issues with the shifter locking up and not allowing the vehicle to come out of gear. According to Roberts, it was inconvenient to drive a van to the manufacturer for maintenance, and “if it was working, there were no symptoms, so it was not an easy diagnosis.” When it locked up, there was no way to get it to the dealer without a costly towing bill. They tried five local auto shops, and were charged for the service each time, but without fixing the problem. They spent at least \$1500 for each vehicle for the attempted repairs.



The University of Kansas and the City of Lawrence jointly own the maintenance facility opened in 2011, built with federal, state and local funds. Each system contracts with MV Transportation, a private provider, to service and maintain vehicles for KU on Wheels and Lawrence Transit (The T).

The solution

This problem and others like it were often discussed at regional meetings. The solution came when the Request for Proposal (RFP) went out for maintenance contractor services for KU on Wheels and Lawrence Transit. “We knew that with our service provider we had the resources that these small operators needed when they were having problems with their vehicles,” said Kaiser. The solution was to create an agreement allowing RTAC member agencies to use the same maintenance service provider as KU on Wheels and Lawrence Transit,

for certain types of maintenance problems. At the March 2014 RTAC meeting, the provision for the service agreement to the member agencies was announced.

What services can (and can't) be provided?

In the negotiated five-year service contract, a requirement was included that outside agencies that are members of the RTAC were eligible for maintenance service, provided that they get prior approval before their staff works on a vehicle. That approval can come through either Bob Nugent, Transit Administrator for the City of Lawrence or from Danny Kaiser. The focus of the service is on specialized equipment, since “that is where most of the problems reside,” according to Nugent.

Additionally, according to Kaiser, “work to be done must be related to a problem that cannot be resolved by a local mechanic—we don’t do oil changes or tune-ups.” In this way, the transit maintenance contractor is not competing with services that can be provided by local private maintenance shops; rather, they are filling gaps for services that are not otherwise available, and are making sure that transit service keeps running efficiently in the City and County.

Finally, the agreement states that services must not interfere with Lawrence Transit or KU on Wheels service. But while Lawrence Transit and KU on Wheels still have highest priority, the other agencies are able to make use of the maintenance contractor’s specialized skills and excess capacity for hard-to-solve problems.

Benefits so far

The program has only been in place since March, so experience with the program is new. However, Douglas County Senior Services is already a big fan of this service. The service helped Senior Services avoid maintenance trips back and forth to Wichita, and provided access to specialized services not otherwise available in Lawrence.

Remember those two vehicles they spent \$3,000 on without a solution? Roberts said they took those vehicles to the contractor as part of the new program, and the contractor was able to pinpoint the problem. “It was such an easy fix, and [they got] us back on the road within 24 hours. We have fought this battle for four years!” While the vans were there, she says, they also adjusted the ramps so they would be safer to use.

Conclusion

Perhaps Roberts says it all: “We are so very happy to be able to use this service for the specialized features our vehicles have that the general service departments are not trained or experienced to be able to complete.... This helps us as we strive to provide services for seniors in Douglas County. Thank you to Bob and Danny for helping get this service agreement in place. It is a valuable asset to our agency.”

If you would like more information about the specific language of the service agreement incorporated into the KU on Wheels and Lawrence Transit maintenance contract, contact either Danny Kaiser at dkaiser@ku.edu or Bob Nugent at rnugent@lawrenceks.org.

Sources

- Jessica Mortinger, May 29, 2014, email correspondence.
- Bob Nugent, July 14, 2014, email interview.
- Danny Kaiser, July 14, 2014, email interview.
- Tina Roberts, July 14, 2014, email interview.
- RTAC Minutes, March 5, 2014, <https://lawrenceks.org/assets/mpo/rtac/MinMar14.pdf>, accessed July 23, 2014.

FEATURE

Flint Hills ATA considering fixed-route service *Continued from page 1*

in 2011 in partnership with the Kansas Department of Transportation, expanded regional demand-response services beyond the previous demand-response service available in City of Manhattan-Riley County. The service expanded into portions of western Pottawatomie County, Geary County (Junction City), and Fort Riley. The pilot program ran until April, 2012. When the pilot ended, Flint Hills ATA partnered with Geary County, Pottawatomie County and Riley County

to continue the regional service as part of their regular Section 5311 demand-response service.

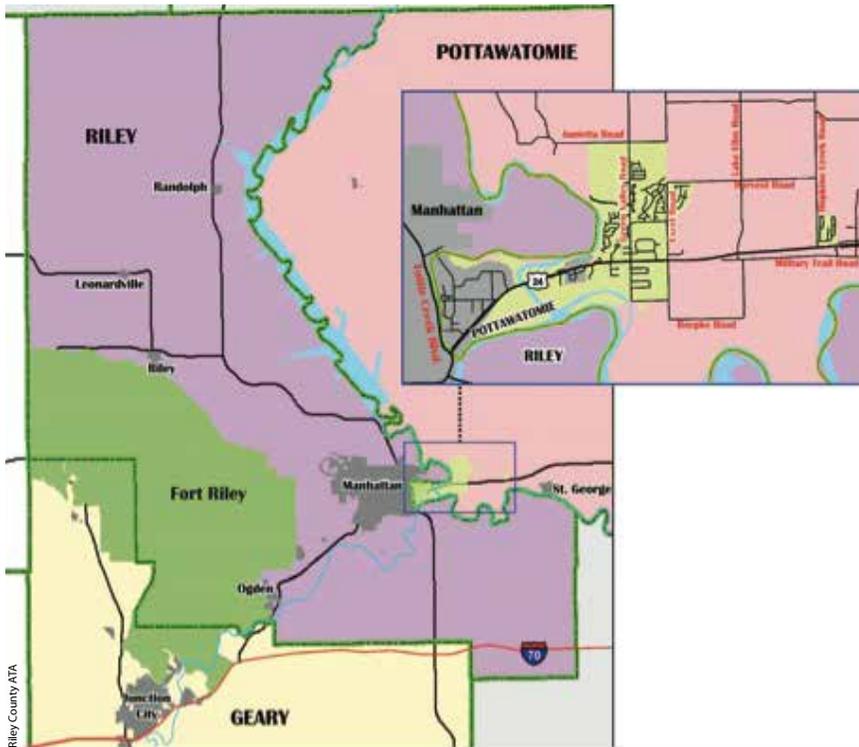
Demand-response ridership for 10 months in 2012 was 3,818. Ridership more than doubled by 2013 to 8,124 passengers. Ridership in 2014 is on pace to grow even more.

Junction City Inter-City Shuttle. In addition to regular demand-response service, Junction City Inter-City Shuttle operates to serve residents from

Manhattan, Ogden, Fort Riley, Grandview Plaza and Junction City. All trips other than those originating in Ogden and Grandview Plaza originate with a local demand-response service providing a trip to a transfer point, where the rider then transfers to the inter-city vehicle. This vehicle then takes the rider to his or her scheduled destination.

Ogden is served by a stop in the city limits and Grandview Plaza is served *continued on next page*

Flint Hills ATA considering fixed-route service *Continued from page 3*



The Junction City-Grandview Plaza Fixed Route Feasibility Study will consider potential service expansion in Geary County as part of a coordinated system of service provided by Flint Hills ATA in Riley, Geary and Pottawatomie Counties.

by a deviated fixed route which allows the intercity vehicle to deviate from the route to pick up these riders. The intercity shuttle operates 14 trips during the

day from 6:00 a.m. to 6:40 p.m., Monday through Friday. Ridership for the Inter-City Shuttle has grown just as the demand-response service has: 660 rides in 2011,

up to nearly 14,000 rides in 2013, and growing even more in 2014.

The fixed route feasibility study

The purpose of this study is to help Flint Hills ATA determine the feasibility of providing fixed-route transit services in addition to complementary paratransit service to meet mobility needs in Geary County, Kansas. The feasibility study will include an analysis of the demographic characteristics of Junction City and Grandview Plaza to identify transit-dependent populations likely to use transit services, to identify patterns of existing service, and usage by Junction City and Grandview Plaza residents of their demand-response services. Demand for fixed-route service will be estimated, with an opportunity for input from local leaders and the general public. The initial study won't be a full implementation plan, but will provide a big step forward on identifying viable route designs, estimated ridership, and associated costs.

Next steps

Flint Hills ATA is working with the KU Transportation Center, KDOT and Geary County to get the work underway. Expected completion date of the study is May 2015. For more information, contact Anne Smith, Director, Flint Hills ATA, at asmith@rileycountyks.gov.

MANAGEMENT

Steps to Take in Deciding to Evacuate Your Vehicle

By Anne Lowder and Pat Weaver

Making the decision to evacuate a vehicle is something you hope you never have to do as a rural transit driver. However, planning in advance about when, where and how you would do it is important to operating a safe transit system. In our last issue, (July 2014) we announced the availability of hands-on training for conducting vehicle evacuations. Here are some of the basics for transit drivers to use in making a decision to evacuate in an emergency.

It's not just about walking off the bus

There are some important decisions to be made before

evacuating, but all those decisions must be made in just a few seconds. Discuss these potential circumstances with agency staff in advance, and then practice the necessary steps. Every situation is different, so ultimately it's up to the driver to quickly make the best possible decisions, and then act.

Steps to an evacuation decision

Let's look at the following steps of an emergency evacuation of a transit vehicle and consider some details:

Step One: Assess the risk. In this first step, the driver is quickly assessing the situation to determine whether

evacuation is the best choice, or whether it's safer to stay on the vehicle. Factors such as smoke, fire or water submersion are going to require evacuation; you and your passengers probably are going to be safer off the bus. In circumstances like a crash in which there is no fire, you might determine that it is safest to keep everyone on the bus until help arrives, particularly if evacuating would put passengers in danger from other traffic.

Step Two: Call for help. The driver next determines whether to call to 911 or call dispatch. When in doubt, call 911 first to get help on its way as quickly as possible. Of course, there may be circumstances (like a vehicle breakdown) that do not require emergency response, but do require a response from your agency. Practice scenarios with your drivers so that they are absolutely clear about who they should call in each type of emergency, and ensure that they have the tools to do so. (Does everyone have a phone? How about radios?)

Incidentally, if you are a driver making a 911 call, always start by giving your name and location. Then provide a description of the problem and additional details as you have time. In a role-playing exercise as part of our RTAP emergency evacuation workshop, most drivers start reporting the problem (crash and injuries) and then state the location. The problem is, you could be halfway through your description and lose contact with 911/dispatch, having never given your location.

Consider working with your local emergency response agencies in advance to provide them with a contact name and number for your agency to alert if an emergency call comes in from a driver. Phone numbers on the side of your vehicle (including area code) can also help first responders connect with your agency.

Step Three: Rapidly evacuate. If the decision is to evacuate, it is essential to do so as quickly as possible, without panicking. Rural transit drivers, we find, generally know their passengers, and know some of them need more assistance than others. Some passengers may be able to assist others. The driver, while assisting passengers to evacuate, also needs to direct those who are ambulatory to help with the evacuation and to assist others.

What if the driver and helpers cannot evacuate everyone? You, as a driver, need to stay as calm as possible and give clear, firm instructions as you're assisting to help get as many people off as you can, including yourself. You've made the call for help, and first responders are on the way; they may need to finish the evacuation.

Step Four: Stay together. The driver's announcement to evacuate the vehicle needs to include the path for evacuation (which door, hatch or window) and then where to rally after the evacuation. For example: "Folks, we need

to evacuate this vehicle because I suspect a fire. We will be using the rear exit. John and Sue, I need your assistance in helping people out the back door. Please stay together, and move as far away from the vehicle and the road as possible."

Step Five: Help the injured. Helping the injured usually involves preventing or slowing shock symptoms. Symptoms of shock include rapid, shallow breathing, cold, clammy skin, rapid, weak pulse, dizziness, bluish lips/ fingernails and sweating. Treatment includes laying the person down (if possible) and elevating the feet about 12 inches above the head unless you suspect leg, hips, back or neck injury. Cover and keep them warm. Finally, be prepared to turn the person on their side if they vomit.

Step Six: Re-assess the situation. You have completed steps One through Five. Now re-assess. Let's say your current situation is that everyone is together, away from the vehicle. The most important thing is to remain calm and in control of the situation. You have let your passengers know that you called 911 and help is on the way. Continue to re-evaluate the condition of the injured and, if possible, call 911 again to get an update on estimated time of arrival for the first responders.

In summary, conducting emergency exercises is very important. The exercises increase skills and instill confidence in your drivers' ability to cope in an emergency. It has been shown that transit agencies that conduct emergency exercises are better prepared to respond to emergencies. Emergency exercises also enhance external and internal communication by developing best practices for your agency and community.

Conclusion

Every emergency situation is different, and no one response fits all circumstances. The best way to prepare is to work out scenarios of possible risks, and then role-play and discuss a response for each scenario with your drivers. Emergency exercises are an activity that should be integrated into your drivers' training on a regular basis. Evacuation exercises need to be routinely created, practiced, evaluated, and revised.

We encourage you to discuss hosting an emergency evacuation training at your Coordinated Transit District meeting. Decide which transit agency would like to host the training (provide the meeting room, buses and parking lot) then call Anne at Kansas RTAP at (785) 864-1469. We'll work on scheduling a training session for 2015 (March through November). While we won't drive your bus into running water to teach you safe evacuation, we will use transit vehicles, equipment, and people to get you more comfortable with the evacuation process.

Source

- TCRP Synthesis 160: Paratransit Emergency Preparedness and Operations Handbook. 2013.

Six Questions to Consider Before You Outsource Your Transit Vehicle Maintenance

Helpful advice from an expert.

By Anne Lowder

You have made a decision to hire a vendor to handle your agency's vehicle maintenance. What questions do you need to ask to make sure that the vendor you select is the right one for the job? Halsey King of Halsey King and Associates Inc. Bus Maintenance Consultants spoke about this topic at the Kansas RTAP pre-conference at the Kansas Public Transit Association Conference August 11, 2014 in Wichita, Kansas. He said that, in looking to solicit proposals, it is important ask yourself (and the vendor) six questions—ranging from the capacity to handle multiple types of vehicles to technician skills—to make sure that the vendor you choose can handle your vehicle maintenance needs. It is also important to give yourself some experience with the vendor (in the six question topic areas) before committing to a long-term contract. Below are the important questions small and rural fleet operators need to ask.



Kansas RTAP / P. Weaver

Halsey King of Halsey King & Associates explains the vehicle inspection process to over 50 Kansas transit managers working to improve their vehicle maintenance management.

1 Does the vendor have the capacity to maintain my vehicles? Some smaller transit agencies have a range of vehicles from 12-20 passenger vehicles to mini-vans and even passenger cars. Do you contract locally with a garage that also works on vehicles for local residents? In this case when you solicit proposals and interview the maintenance vendor, the vendor must understand that you are a regulated agency. You are required to provide a certain level of customer service and, to do so, you need vehicles that are able to return to service as scheduled.

Is your contractor available to work nights or weekends in order to make sure that your vehicles are ready to transport on a daily basis? Will your contractor make your vehicles priority-one over other customers?

2 Does the vendor understand the rules that govern regulated vehicles? Your agency is regulated by Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the Federal

Transit Administration (FTA) and, to a degree, the Federal Motor Carriers Safety Administration (FMCSA) and the Transportation Division of the Kansas Corporation Commission. Additional federal regulations, such as the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), include provisions that impact the design, operation and maintenance of your vehicle.

An average small bus is certified by the manufacturer to meet approximately 35 of the 53 federal motor vehicle safety standards (FMVSS) covering the body, exhaust, seat belts and other driver control systems, King said. The FMVSS apply to all motor vehicles. Not all standards are necessary for each type. For instance, five of the FMVSS standards are for school buses alone. Each standard tells you what type of vehicle it covers, and the date it went into effect. The FMVSS standards can be found at <http://www.nhtsa.gov/cars/rules/import/FMVSS/>.

Here's an example of how regulations and standards influence maintenance on a wheel chair lift. If a shoulder bolt (the bolt that allows the roll stop plate to go up and down on some lifts) fell off of the lift, and the technician went over to a bolt bin at the garage and replaced the shoulder bolt with a different, plain bolt, was the work done correctly? The answer is no—because the replacement bolt was not a tested-and-approved shoulder bolt specified by the manufacturer. King recommends not replacing a part on a wheelchair lift that was not purchased from the manufacturer. King states, "I am not a lawyer, but in my experience, lifts can create litigation problems." The worst scenario is that the bus goes back into service, the lift fails, and someone gets hurt.

The technicians working on your vehicles need to be well-familiar with the contents of the manuals for the different systems on your vehicle. The manuals specify if a trained technician is needed, and they specify maintenance

schedules for different components of the system. King said a maintenance technician will see your bus come in and can tell by the logo that it is a Ford or Chevy. He will know what to do under the hood, but you need to make sure he understands the maintenance required for the rest of the vehicle. The lift is a different component with its own maintenance requirements, and so is the HVAC unit in the passenger area of the vehicle. If the vendor routinely maintains just what is under the hood, and ignores the maintenance schedules for the other components, the lift and HVAC unit can become out of manufacturer warranty compliance and may cause operational issues with higher cost implications.

Who is responsible for the inspection and service work on the lift? King said that under federal regulations 49 CFR 37-38 and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), it is the transit agency's responsibility to insure that adequate maintenance is performed on lifts, grab bars, hand holds, ramps, stairs, and all other ADA equipment on the bus. With that in mind, if you are considering subcontracting the maintenance, make sure your potential vendor has the capacity, training, and attention-to-detail to work on your vehicles.

3 Are the maintenance facilities well equipped?

Vehicles are becoming more sophisticated with each vehicle generation, with new features like electronic engine management systems, LED lights and rivetless body parts. Therefore the vehicles require more maintenance than just changing the oil and rotating the tires. It is important, when you inspect a vendor's site that the facilities are clean, well-lit and have adequate room for your buses to maneuver without being damaged, and have a way to keep your expensive vehicles secure and safe.

4 How will parts and supplies be obtained? Transit buses are generally made of components from different manufacturers. You may have the bus chassis from one manufacturer such as Ford, the bus body possibly from Eldorado National Bus Sales, and the lift from Ricon or Braun. Each component on the bus has a preventive maintenance schedule and a manufacturer's warranty on parts and replacement that need to be followed. In your agreement with your maintenance vendor, the vendor should keep some fast-moving preventive maintenance parts such as belts, filters, and hoses in stock and be made aware that some parts will need to be ordered from the manufacturer.

King recommended always asking for your old parts back and/or for a core credit toward returned and remanufactured parts. [A core credit is much like getting money back for recycling. Parts on your vehicle have life cycles such as water pumps. When the parts are replaced, some can be sold back into the parts cycle to be re-manufactured. It might only be

a few dollars, but it should be considered during contract negotiations. The larger the fleet, the greater difference a core credit might make to you.]

5 Technician's skills, are they adequate? With more sophisticated vehicles the systems and component technology on your buses maybe beyond the technology found in the average automobile. That is why it is important to know the skill levels of the vendor's technicians and be sure they can operate, repair, and inspect all systems on your buses. Ask to see the each technician's certification and experience which should include certification from Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) or The New Service Technicians Society. King also recommended asking to look at a technician's toolbox. He joked that if the box has lots of hammers this is not a good sign (you don't need to pound on the high-tech components of a vehicle). Instead, the box should be well-organized with wrenches, screw drivers, specialty tools and scanning tools.

Finally, when negotiating a contract with a maintenance vendor, explain your requirements for detailed work orders—which should include a parts listing and work performed. Then each time you have work done, check the work order for time charged to the project, a list of parts worked on or replaced, and other details necessary to track your vehicle's performance.

6 Has the vendor prepared a realistic budget? The vendor's proposal should include a budget that covers the level of maintenance you asking them to provide. The vendor's budget needs to be prepared so that you can understand overall parts and repair costs. Smaller maintenance vendors will more likely submit budgets based on hourly costs. It is best then to run on a verbal or "handshake" agreement. This will allow you to see how their costs are running on parts, time and labor (PTL), without having to commit to a specified contract time and cost. After a time, a contract might be beneficial, especially if the vendor is purchasing the necessary technology to work on your vehicles and has installed security to safeguard your vehicles while at their shop.

In closing

A final note: Once you have selected a vendor, be sure to maintain regular communication. Meet on a regular basis to review costs, problems with manufacturer warranties and obtaining parts, repeated maintenance on a vehicle, unexpected maintenance, and recommendations on replacing vehicles. You, as general manager of your transit agency, are the person responsible for the maintenance of your fleet, whether the vehicles are maintained in-house or are outsourced.

Source

- King, Halsey. "Vehicle Maintenance Management for Kansas Rural and Specialized Transit." Kansas Public Transit Association Meeting. Wichita, KS. August 11, 2014.

Build Upon Community Events and Programs to Promote Transit

By Anne Lowder

Events and programs in your community can give your transit agency an opportunity to develop marketing that will have community residents talking about and supporting transit. Whether you are a one-vehicle rural transit agency or a Kansas urban transit agency, look to needs and events happening in your community to pitch ideas for marketing collaborations. Two examples of transit and community collaborations in Kansas are highlighted below. Each collaboration found a niche that is unique to the needs and personality of their cities while also increasing awareness of transit in the community. We hope this article will inspire you to look for collaborations that build upon your community events to highlight your transit agency. Even though these examples are from urban systems, their projects were relatively low-cost and could be applied in smaller rural communities.

Wichita Transit, WAMPO, and City of Wichita Public Works Collaboration

Tonya Bronleewe, spokesperson for the Wichita collaboration, is an environmental quality specialist for the City of Wichita's Office of Environmental Health, part of the Public Works Department. She said the three-year campaign was a success. The purpose of the project, she said, was to increase transit ridership to decrease the number of cars, aiming to lower the ozone levels in the City of Wichita. Ozone levels are at their highest on hot days so the campaign for a week of free rides was scheduled during July—typically a hot month in Kansas. As a result, ridership increased 41 percent compared to 2011 averages, 59 percent compared to 2012 averages, and 71 percent compared to 2013. [Transit ridership declined between 2011 and 2012, after a fare increase.] Bronleewe says they will continue to monitor ridership over the next few months to see if the ridership sustains the uptick. (City of Wichita Press Release August 18, 2014).



"Free ride" promotions can entice new customers to try transit and reduce the number of vehicles on the road at the same time.

Funding for the campaign came from an \$80,000 grant provided by Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) to WAMPO. The \$80,000 was supplemented by 20 percent match from transit and air quality budgets. CMAQ funded the reimbursements for fares, marketing and printing, and staff time was used as the 20 percent match.

The partners are going to continue free fares this year by offering free fares on ozone alert days. Environmental Health's Air Quality Program monitors ozone conditions and forecasts potentially high ozone days. Staff put out alerts so residents can take action to keep ozone levels below the federal limits. Ozone alert day notices will be available on highway marquees, local news outlets and at the City of Wichita and Wichita Transit websites and social media sites. There is also an email notification option at <http://www.wichita.gov/ozone>. The campaign will continue until October 31, 2014, which is the end of "ozone season" per Bronleewe, and begin again in 2015.

Wichita Transit and WAMPO are already looking forward to a bigger, better Free Fares program next year.

Lawrence Transit and Van Go

Lawrence Transit staff looked to find a partnership between transit and art to highlight a new pilot project for late night bus services in the City of Lawrence. This resulted in a partnership with the Van Go, Inc. Arts program, a social service program for high-needs youth (see sidebar). According to Robert Nugent, administrator, Lawrence Public Transit, the service, known as Nightline, operates from 8:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. Monday to Saturday. Lawrence Transit wanted a uniquely colored logo that would provide identity to the service while maintaining the Lawrence Transit identity.

The project resulted in a "rolling mural" applied to a 20-foot bus used for the new service. The mural depicts the unique history of the City of Lawrence. Rather than actually painting the art on the bus, the art was applied by means of a vinyl wrap. Vinyl wrapping the bus greatly reduces the



Lawrence Transit

Collaboration with Van Go led to a unique vinyl wrap for a Lawrence Transit vehicle—a great way to showcase local artistic talent and increase visibility of the transit system as a community partner.

amount of time that a bus would be out of service while the artwork is applied. Van Go funded the mural design, in part through a grant from Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area's Interpretive Grant Program. Van Go's JAMS (Jobs in Art Make Sense) program employed apprentice artists ages 14-18 for eight weeks to research and create the design. The bus debuted at the Art Tougeau Parade in Lawrence in May 2014, which features art-adorned vehicles, bicycles and anything else with wheels. Lawrence Transit paid all costs associated with the wrapping of the bus which amounted to approximately \$4,000.

Conclusion

Potential partners exist in any community. Be creative in thinking about the possibilities. Wichita Transit, WAMPO and the City of Wichita Public Works Department came together with the transit agency wanting to increase ridership and the other partners wanting to improve air quality. Lawrence Transit and Van Go collaborated because the transit agency wanted a unique logo for a new service and because

Van Go, Inc. is an arts-based social service agency that provides year-round after-school and summer job training programs to high-needs and under-served youth, ages 14-21. Using art, Van Go delivers constructive activities to youth at risk for drug and alcohol use, teen pregnancy, truancy or delinquency. Their JAMS program has created functional pieces of art (such as benches and murals) used at public places, businesses, and residences all over the city.

Source: <http://www.van-go.org/about/>.

Van Go wanted an art project for their JAMS program, and visibility for what they do. Each collaboration benefited the partners and their communities. What collaboration opportunities can you find in your community?

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Does Your Vehicle Fit Your Driver?

Apply the principles of CarFit to your transit vehicle.

By Anne Lowder

Checking to see that your drivers and the transit vehicles they drive fit well together is important for safety. For example, the rear view mirror may not be at the correct angle. Or the angle of the side view mirrors may result in a blind spot. Or the shoulder strap on the seat belt may need to be lowered a bit. A driver's position in a vehicle is critical when it comes to driving control. Proper positioning in the vehicle allows your driver to have greater steering control and sufficient vision around the vehicle and down the road.

A program called CarFit, created by the American Society on Aging and developed with AARP, AAA and the American Occupational Therapy Association is designed to help seniors improve the fit of their vehicles, promote conversations about safe driving and mobility options, and offer resources to help promote safe driving. The process and the tips that come from a CarFit check can easily be transferred to your transit agency and your drivers. [In fact, we're planning to add CarFit assessments to the KSRTAP Defensive Driving Course.] This article will describe a CarFit assessment and its benefits to any driver.

What takes place at a typical CarFit appointment?

CarFit is a 20-minute assessment that begins with the driver completing some simple paperwork. A trained technician then uses a checklist to review 12 key areas of the driver's fit to the vehicle. Adjustments include proper positioning of the steering wheel, distance between chest and steering wheel, head restraint alignment, line of sight above the steering wheel, positioning to gas pedal and brake pedal, mirror adjustments, neck mobility for visual blind spot check, and operation of vehicle controls.

In what ways can CarFit improve road safety?

Kansas Highway Patrolman Donald Hughes, a trained CarFit technician, gave these three quick examples of how a CarFit assessment promotes road safety.

Example one: Knowing how to properly adjust one's mirrors can greatly minimize blind spots for a driver who may wish to change lanes.

Example two: Good foot positioning on the gas and brake pedals is important. If the driver is reaching with his or her toes to press on the pedals, it can cause leg fatigue and slowed reaction times.

Example three: A driver runs a risk of serious injury if sitting closer than 10 inches to the steering wheel.

How is CarFit different than typical safety training?

Driver safety programs, such as "Coaching the Van Driver," improve adult driver safety by addressing cognitive abilities and skills. CarFit assessments, on the other hand, focus on the driver's position in a vehicle, which is critical for driving control. Proper positioning allows you greater steering control, as well as a dramatic increase in vision around your vehicle and down the road.

The CarFit 12-point checklist

The checklist covers characteristics of the vehicle as well as the driver:

1. Are you the only driver of the vehicle? If the answer is no, all drivers should be adjusted to the vehicle.
2. Do you wear your safety belt every time you are in the car? The belts should be bone-to-bone for placement. The shoulder belt goes across the collar bone and breast bone and the lap belt runs across the hip bones. Safety belts should

never run across soft tissue such as the neck or stomach areas as this could lead to internal body damage in a crash at a speed as low as 30 mph.

3. The steering wheel, in a vehicle with a driver's-side air bag, needs to be tilted to point at the driver's chest (not the face). The tilted steering wheel should not obstruct the driver's view of the speedometer.

4. The driver's chest needs to be at least 10 inches from the steering wheel. Any closer, the driver risks arm, neck or facial injury in a crash.

5. The steering wheel needs to be tilted so that the driver's line of sight is 3 inches above the steering wheel. Another tip is hand placement on the steering wheel. Like me, many of us were taught to grip the wheel at 10 and 2 o'clock, as on the face of the clock. It is now recommended to grip at 3 and 9 o'clock or 4 and 8 o'clock. This allows for optimum control of the steering wheel while minimizing chance of injury if the air bag deploys.

6. Head restraints, a.k.a. head rests, reduce risk of neck injury from whiplash during a rear-end collision. The top of the head rest should be adjusted to a point slightly above your ears and, if possible, within 3 inches of the back of your head when you are seated in a normal, upright position. A driving tip to reduce injury is to avoid leaning forward while you drive.

7. The driver should be able to operate the brake and gas pedals with the ball of the foot, without having to reach with the toes. (At this time in the assessment, the technician will check that the brake lights are in working order.)



Kansas RTAP / A. Lowder

If you don't have a certified CarFit technician available, like Kansas Highway Patrolman Donald Hughes (above, at a CarFit assessment in Topeka), use the 12-point checklist to do your own assessment of your vehicle's fit for your driver.

8. Properly adjusted mirrors keep you aware of your surroundings and minimize your blind spot. A driving tip from the National Safety Council recommends checking the view in your mirrors every 3 to 5 seconds.

The rearview mirror. Once the driver is in a properly adjusted seat, he or she should be able to look in the rearview mirror and see directly out the center of the rear window. The driver should check the view of the outside edges of the rear window. If either edge is more visible than the other, re-adjust the mirror.

The sideview mirrors. When it comes to eliminating blind spots, properly-

adjusted sideview mirrors, and checking them often while driving, are key. To adjust the driver's side mirror, lean as far as you can toward the mirror, and then tilt your mirror so that you can just barely see the rear of your vehicle in the mirror. When you sit back in the seat, it may seem like the mirror is too far out, but it is actually now showing you part of your blind spot as well as maximizing your view of the road beside you. To adjust the passenger side mirror, simply lean toward the midline of the vehicle, as far as you can toward that mirror, and then tilt your mirror so that you can just barely see the rear of your vehicle in the mirror.

9. As we age, we lose neck mobility. To check neck mobility, have a person stand on the left and right of the vehicle. The driver will look over his/her left and right shoulder and identify the person standing beside the vehicle. Knowing neck mobility limitation will help in identifying and reducing blind spots while driving.

10. The driver should be able to insert the ignition key and turn it with ease.

11. Basically, this step in the assessment is a pre-trip check of the driver's knowledge the vehicle controls and how they work. Certified CarFit trainer Trooper Donald Hughes of the Kansas Highway Patrol, pointed out that many people do not know where the emergency flashers are—he said some drivers reach for the top of the steering wheel where the button used to be, on older model vehicles. Now the emergency flasher button is on the dashboard with a red triangle on it. Other controls to check include the left and right turn signals, headlights (high and low beam), windshield wipers, parking brake and that the steering wheel easily turns from far left to far right.

12. The last item on the CarFit assessment is education on proper tire traction and pressure and the importance of cleanliness of headlights and the windshield.

Summary

The CarFit 12-point assessment can actively engage your drivers in adjusting transit vehicles to themselves in a way that maximizes control of the vehicle as well as offering the most protection for the driver in the event of a crash. It's good for them and good for your agency. Watch for more information in our newsletter on CarFit assessments coming in 2015.

Sources

- CarFit. Helping mature drivers find their safest fit. September 27, 2013. <http://www.Car-Fit.org>
- National Safety Council Coaching the Van Driver Three. Instructor Guide. January 2009. Pages 13-37.
- Interview with Don Hughes, Kansas Highway Patrol, September 27, 2013.

How Do Your Customers Find You on the Web? Provide Them with an Easy-to-Remember Shortcut by Registering Your Own Domain Name

By Pat Weaver



Even very small rural public transportation services have started websites. However, how easy is it to find that website? When your transit service is one of many services offered under an umbrella non-profit agency or as a department of your county, your webpage can get buried in the many layers of the parent website. Requiring the user to click multiple times to find you can discourage the user from looking at your page. And, handing out a URL for your transit services with 50 characters is useless, since no one will be able to remember it. This article will give you some easy steps to create a custom domain name for your website without having to actually change your web host or require any programming.

Why is the web address important?

There are three main reasons to pay attention to the website address that you use: customer service, marketing, and portability.

Customer service. A well-designed web site requires a great deal of work, usually with the goal of helping users and potential users access information about your transit services. While it may be true that some of your passengers do not use the Internet, that demographic is changing rapidly, with more and more individuals having access and willing to use it more readily with all kinds of devices: computers, smartphones, tablets, etc. If they are unable to find your website, or if it is difficult to find information on your site, customers and potential customers are likely to be

discouraged. A website that is hard to locate may also push more people to call in for information, increasing the burden on whoever answers your phone: you, administrative staff, or dispatchers. At least the answers to simple questions should be answered and easily-available on your website.

Marketing. An easy-to-remember web address is easier to market. Whether you are using newspaper ads, PSAs on the radio, or brochures to identify your services, an easy-to-remember web address that people are more likely to remember is more effective at getting people to your site.

For those of you who have used the Kansas RTAP website address, you might not know that the host address for our website is actually `http://www2.ku.edu/~kutc/cgi-wrap/rtap/index.php`. But the address you may know is `www.ksrtap.org` or even `www.kansasrtap.org` – our “web domain aliases.” Try them—they all work. But, which of those are you likely to remember easily? If you are going to go to the work of maintaining a website, then make it easy to find.

Portability. Many of us have experienced the “pain” of having to change our email address because we changed service providers. All the work of notifying everyone of your new address seems to go on for months. By purchasing your own domain name, you take control of that problem. The actual physical location of your website may change from time to time, but that will all be behind the scenes, with the address to your website remaining the same. (By the way, the same can be done with your own personal email).

What is domain registration?

The International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) is a not-for-profit partnership formed in 1998 with the responsibility for internet space allocation and domain name system management. The management system they created allows for the use of names, rather than a series of hard-to-remember numbers, to link to other computers on the internet. ICANN oversees the huge network of unique identifiers that allow computers to find one another, and contracts with a large number of “registrars,” to manage the reservation of internet domain names. Your agency would contact one of these registrars (companies) to purchase a domain name and assign the location of your website to this new name.

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Tips on Choosing a Domain Name

With simplicity and clarity in mind as a domain name goal, here are some commonsense things to consider when choosing a domain name:

- **Keep it simple.** If the business or service for which the website is being designed has a complex name, you don't have to use all of it.
- **Abbreviate long business names.** You can truncate a long business name.
- **Use hyphens.** If you must use a long domain name with multiple words, separate each word with a hyphen.
- **Register misspelled variants.** If the domain name contains a commonly misspelled word, register the misspelled variant of the domain name.
- **Purchase a top-level domain extension.** You're likely familiar with top-level domains. For example, .com has always been associated with businesses, .org has been associated with organizations, and .net has been used by a variety of organizations. For a business, your best choice is always .com (if available), with .net ranking a close second. Use the new .mobi extension if your site is strictly for mobile devices.

If you're creating a website for a personal project, the obvious answer is the .me extension. For flag wavers or to identify your site as one associated with the good old USA, consider purchasing the .us extension for your domain name as well.

- **Register the name with more than one popular domain type.** When a website starts gaining popularity, the domain name becomes a valuable entity. And you don't want someone cashing in on your success or popularity by registering a name like yours only under a different domain.

Say that you are "EggzHead.com." You don't want someone glomming on to your (or your client's) coattails by registering the same domain name as a .net or .info domain, like EggzHead.net or EggzHead.info.

Registering a domain isn't expensive, so play it safe and cover your bases with registering on multiple domains. And because registering a domain is relatively inexpensive, you can either park the different domains, or you can use code to redirect the other domains to the main (.com, most likely) website.

When you "park" a domain, you buy the name, but don't put any content on it. The domain name is protected and reserved for whatever you may want to do with it in the future.

- **Choose a domain name that's easy to remember.** If the website domain name doesn't need to include the name of the business or service, brainstorm to come up with a short domain name that can be easily remembered by people who visit the site.
- **Choose a keyword-rich domain name.** You may want a unique domain name that's consistent with your brand. However, getting traffic is a prime concern with most site owners. Therefore, choosing a domain name that has keywords associated with the business or service presented on the website is an excellent way to generate traffic. For example, if you're in the photography business, including images, photos, or photography as part of the domain name will vault you closer to the top of the search engine rankings. Use the DomainName online tool to check for available domain names based on the keyword you enter: <http://www.domaintools.com/buy/domain-suggestions>.
- **Check for similar domain names.** If you fall in love with a domain name that's similar to another domain name, do some research to make sure that the similar domain name is not copyrighted.

Source:

Karlins, David and Sahlin, Doug. Domain Name Best Practices. Building Websites All-in-One for Dummies, 3rd Edition. 2012. <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/domain-name-best-practices.html>. Accessed 7-28-14.

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- Heng, Christopher. How to Register Your Own Domain Name. Accessed 8/22/14. <http://www.thesitewizard.com/archive/registerdomain.shtml>.
- King, Michael. How to Register Your Own Domain Name. PCWorld, October 15, 2011. Accessed 8/22/2014. http://www.pcworld.com/article/241722/how_to_register_your_own_domain_name.html.

How To Reach Us

For a free subscription to the *Kansas TransReporter* or to contact one of our faculty or staff, call toll-free (800) 248-0350 (in Kansas) or (785) 864-2595 (outside Kansas). Send correspondence to:

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Send e-mail messages to Pat Weaver at weaver@ku.edu or Lisa Harris at LHarris@ku.edu. Visit our website at <http://www.ksrtap.org>

Kansas RTAP Staff

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

Project Director Pat Weaver
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Other Services

In addition to publishing the *Kansas TransReporter*, Kansas RTAP 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
- Website
- Email discussion group

Domain name *Continued from page 12*

How much will it cost?

The cost of registering a domain fluctuates from one registrar to another, and typically have different promotions going on, so you'll need to check. However, as a ballpark, you can expect around \$10-\$15 per year for the registration.

How do I register a program name?

Registering a domain name sounds complicated, but support is available to the user that makes it easy. First, you identify a trustworthy registrar with the best prices, and purchase the domain name for any period of time you like (e.g. 1 year, 3 years, 5 years, etc.). There are many registrars, and just as many rankings. It's important to do a little homework in this area because, as with all things related to the internet, there are some scams out there that you want to avoid. Some web hosts will register and pay for a name for free; however, the agreements with these web hosts may make it more expensive if you decide to move your website to a different location. Check with your current website host to find out if this is the case.

If you're registering a new domain name under your existing website host, just go to your web host's website and follow the directions to "domains." If you can't find it, call technical support to let them know what you are trying to do, and they will assist you.

If you're going to register with a registrar that does not currently host your website, you'll need to obtain the names of their primary and secondary nameservers. You do not need to know what this means, just write them down. You can call technical support for your existing website if you're not sure what this is.

Next, go to the registrar's site. In this example, I'll use GoDaddy (an alternative is NameCheap). On the front page, there's a box that says "enter a domain name." This is your opportunity to check to see if the domain name is available. I am using "besttransit.org." I am in luck;

besttransit.org is available, and I am told that the domain name is available for \$12.99 for a year. You will be given a lot of options to add on features, but you can just keep clicking "continue," to get the basics. Once you have selected the period of time for which you want to reserve your website, you'll need to register as a customer to checkout (grab your credit card). In my example, selecting two years bumped the annual price up to \$15.49 per year.

Now that you have your domain name registered, the next step is to point that name in the right direction to your website. The steps you follow will vary from one registrar's website to another. However, now that you have paid for your domain name, it will show up in your account.

You will now want to look for domain settings, which includes nameservers (remember those two you wrote down earlier?) Type those in, and then look for a "Forwarding" option. This is where you will type in that long web address that you are working on changing. Once those changes take effect (sometimes a few hours), you will be able to type in www.besttransit.org (or the name you've selected) and it will take you directly to your website. The existing address doesn't go away; you now just have a second address to access your website.

Conclusion

If your website is part of a county or a multi-service agency with many clicks required to get to your website, there is a relatively inexpensive way to fix it—and make your service a lot more visible to your customers. Consider registering a domain name that provides a unique web presence to your agency. If you have someone else manage your website, and all this is too technical for you, ask your website administrator to add the domain for you. As you've seen, it's not very expensive, and can make a big difference in how easily your customers can find you.

Transit Resources

PUBLICATIONS

FY2014 Triennial Review Workshop Workbook. The triennial review is one of the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) management tools for examining grantee performance and adherence to current FTA requirements and policies. Mandated by Congress in 1982, the triennial review occurs once every three years. Federal Transit Administration. http://www.fta.dot.gov/documents/FY_2014_Triennial_Review_Workshop_Workbook_Rev_2.pdf

Seizure Disorder Awareness for Transportation Operators & Customers. Designed for training and operator use, this guide explains epilepsy, what to do in case of seizure, and when to call 911. Easter Seals Project Action. June 2014. <http://www.projectaction.org/ResourcesPublications/BrowseOurResourceLibrary/ResourceSearchResults.aspx?org=a2GSpnDbrul=&query=Seizure%20Disorder%20Awareness%20for%20Transportation%20Operators%20&%20Customers>.

How to Find Almost Anything: A Toolkit Connecting Rural and Tribal Transit Stakeholders to Information. This toolkit is designed to showcase the numerous free and low-cost resources available to rural and tribal transit providers and state DOT officials. National RTAP. 2014. <http://webbuilder.nationalrtap.org/findanything/welcome.aspx>

Grant Writing Made Easy: How to Write a Successful Grant Application. Provides tips on searching for grant opportunities, covers the essentials of submitting and following-up on your application, and provides a list of helpful resources. National RTAP. 2014. <http://demopro.nationalrtap.org/emailResource.aspx?design=1&fileid=898>

Seizure Disorder Awareness for Transportation Operators and Customers. This brochure will help you understand the signs of epilepsy and what you should do in case a passenger experiences a seizure on public transportation. Easter Seals Project Action. June 2014.

CONFERENCES

October 12-15, 2014

2014 APTA Annual Meeting & EXPO.
Houston, TX.
<http://www.apta.com/mc/annual/Pages/default.aspx>

October 26 – 29, 2014

21st National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity
Bus Transportation
Monterey, CA.
www.ribtc.org

October 29 – 31, 2014

Shaping the New Future of Paratransit: An International
Conference on Demand Responsive Transit.
Monterey, CA.
<http://www.cvent.com/events/shaping-the-future-for-paratransit/event-summary-412e7b4752bf41f58e038909c0864c92.aspx>

January 11-15, 2015

94th Annual Meeting of the Transportation Research Board.
Washington, DC. <http://www.trb.org/AnnualMeeting2015/AnnualMeeting2015.aspx>

ORDER FORM

A few of our above resources are available in hard copy for readers who do not have internet access. These resources have a checkbox at the beginning of the listing. Check the item(s) you would like to receive and fill out the form below. Fax to (785) 864-3199.

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The *Kansas TransReporter* is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the Kansas University Transportation Center (KUTC). 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

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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

2014 KANSAS RTAP TRAINING:

NSC Coaching the Van Driver and Curbing Transit Operator Distracted Driving
October 9 in Bonner Springs
October 22 in Ottawa

Passenger Assistance and Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention
October 15 in Russell
November 19 in Moundridge

Emergency Response Procedures and Crisis Communication
October 16 in Salina
October 23 in Topeka
November 20 in Emporia

National Transit Institute Advance Mobility Device Securement Train-the-Trainer Workshop
October 28 -29 in Augusta

NTI Developing a Transit Emergency Plan Workshop

December 8-9 in Salina

Coming in Early 2015:

Braun Lift Maintenance Training
Kansas RTAP has contacted the Braun Corporation to provide on-site lift maintenance training for technicians and their supervisors. Participation in the half-day training, provided by a Braun instructor, will allow technicians to perform maintenance on the lifts without voiding the warranty (parts still must be ordered from the distributor). We plan to schedule the training in 3 or 4 locations around the state, tentatively planned for early February. Watch for registration information on the website by the end of October. For more information, contact Pat at weaver@ku.edu.

You can request to host two hands-on training opportunities:

- **Advanced Mobility Securement**
- **Evacuation Techniques for Rural Transit Passengers**

Contact Anne Lowder at 785-864-1469 or alowder@ku.edu to host and schedule these training sessions in your area.

Watch for the 2015 training schedule

to be posted online in early January. If you have a specific training class you would like held in your area in late winter or early spring, or would like to host a course, please contact Anne at alowder@ku.edu by November 1.

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 kelly@ku.edu.

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