



(l-r) Videographer Jim Jewell and production assistant Don Mayberger

RTAP video to convey the importance of rural transit in Kansas

“This video will tell the story of public transit in the rural communities through the voices of the people who use it and serve it,” said Lisa Harris, director of Kansas RTAP. Riders, transit drivers, dispatchers, managers, elected officials and other stakeholders came before the camera to discuss the importance of rural transit in our state. The video will be released this summer.

Harris, who is working on the film along with professional videographer Jim Jewell, interviewed people in Nemaha, Riley and Saline counties about the differing transit services and benefits provided in these three communities.

“We wanted to add a ‘human face’ along with the data often provided when seeking support for public transit. We want to convey how critical public transit is to our communities, especially in rural areas.”

“We heard so many great and heart-felt comments when we talked to people impacted by the availability of transportation,” Harris said. There were stories of older individuals who could get to medical appointments or run basic errands without the need for their family members to take time off work to provide transportation. It was the difference in whether those seniors could continue to live at home.

A transit employee relayed the success story of a young, homeless mother who used public transit every day to get her kids to school and to make it to her job. Over time she was able to move out of the shelter and eventually buy a car. She came to the transit center to say good-bye and to deliver treats for the transit workers. Access to public transportation was key in her ability to keep her job and change the direction of her life.

“It was a tremendous educational experience to talk with these people who are personally impacted by the availability of transit. The video will highlight some amazing people who work for transit in Kansas, too,” Harris said. “They understand the day-to-day importance transit service has in their own communities.”

Harris and the video team interviewed five or six people in each location, filming testimonials and shots of the community and its buses.

A similar film produced by Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) inspired the Kansas-based version. Harris, who is the assistant director of the University of Kansas Transportation Center (KUTC), which oversees the Kansas RTAP program, said her organization worked with KDOT to discover what they hoped to accomplish with the video. KDOT provides funding for the RTAP program.

Right now, she and her team are viewing and editing the footage for the final push to completion. The video will debut at the Kansas Public Transit Association (KPTA) conference in Salina in August. KDOT and Kansas RTAP will distribute the approximately five-minute video to communities with transit agencies or those who are considering starting one. It can be used as a tool to help convince the general public and elected officials of the importance of public transit in local communities throughout our state. The video will also be accessible on YouTube and the Kansas RTAP website, ksrtap.org. “We look forward to telling this story,” Harris said.

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