



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

A Service of The University of Kansas Transportation Center for Rural Transit Providers

Improving Pedestrian Safety for Transit Riders

By Nick Pappas



KUTC / Robert Rescott, 2009.

Transit providers are not the only agencies responsible for safety for transit riders. Public works departments and private property owners also have a role. A guide published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) focuses on the safety of passengers before they reach the transit vehicle—or after they leave it—when they are still pedestrians. Providing a safe means of access to transit services improves the quality of the overall service and encourages potential riders to choose transit service as their means of transportation.

The *Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies*, available at the link on page 2, was developed to address the issues of pedestrian safety and accessibility. While transit agencies can address these issues on their own property, they often lack the authority to address similar issues on property they don't own. The guide says that a crucial step in providing pedestrian safety and access is building partnerships with the other organizations and government agencies—including those responsible for road design and traffic safety.

Tools for assessing pedestrian safety

Chapter 1 of the Guide provides some basic tools for identifying safety and accessibility issues. This includes a Road Safety Audit (RSA), for which your agency could designate a team member. While an RSA team may not be able to directly make changes to the roadway, it can identify issues of safety and accessibility and suggest measures that can be implemented appropriate to the community's budget. RSAs can be conducted during any construction phase of a roadway, from pre-construction to after the roadway has been in use for some time.

A simple method for identifying safety issues is to observe pedestrians as they access the area near transit stops. For instance, observers might see pedestrians using informal pathways where sidewalks do not exist, competing for bench seating at the stop, or crossing the street at an unmarked area to a transit stop mid-block. They can also observe motorist behavior near and around the area. Transit agencies can then use this information to improve the accessibility of the stop, improve the features of the stop itself, and coordinate with other organizations (local law enforcement) to both educate drivers about pedestrian safety and enforce laws.

The Guide suggests that transit agencies work with local and state transportation and law enforcement agencies to analyze pedestrian crash data near transit access points to find the sites with greatest safety priority. The Guide noted, however, that pedestrian crash data is not always completely accurate in identifying safety problems; police reports do not always include every pedestrian accident, and there may be relatively few pedestrian accidents in areas of higher pedestrian danger simply because pedestrians recognize

these conditions and choose to avoid them. The FHWA recommends compiling three to 10 years of crash data to see clear trends, while taking into account any development changes made in the area during the period.

Partnerships for pedestrian safety near transit stops

The Guide encourages transit agencies to develop partnerships with local, regional, and state agencies, community groups, developers, and other transit services in their efforts to improve the pedestrian experience for their riders. Public works agencies are key partners as well. Pedestrian safety issues, including sidewalk and pathway design and street crossings, are often the responsibility of local and state agencies. Transit operations often occur on roads that are maintained by various entities, and can cross multiple jurisdictions. Working with the appropriate roadway owner in developing route locations, stop locations, and pedestrian access can result in the best possible solution for all involved.

Public works organizations can help transit agencies with some of the techniques for identifying issues. They can assist with data collection through an RSA, a pedestrian inventory, pedestrian observation or other methods. It is also important to gather and incorporate first-hand knowledge of transit riders, including disabled riders or representatives of disabled riders, in the identification of safety issues and the design of improvements to address these issues. This cooperation between public works, transit agencies, and the public being served can make roadways safer for the entire community.

Conclusion

Transit services provide a means of transportation, but the issues of public safety and accessibility come into play when these individuals traverse to or from transit vehicles onto sidewalks and streets. For more information, check out the FHWA's *Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies*, available at the link shown in the Sources below. See how your transit agencies, public works organizations, and the community can work together for better and safer multi-modal transportation. ●

Reprinted from the April 2012 issue of the *Kansas TransReporter*, a publication of the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) at the Kansas University Transportation Center.

Source

- *Pedestrian Safety Guide for Transit Agencies*. Federal Highway Administration. 2008. www.walkinginfo.org/training/collateral/resources/transit_guide.pdf