



# Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

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

## Inclusive Planning: What Does it Look Like?

By Clifton Hall

In rural transportation, it is common for transit providers to provide service to underrepresented groups such as persons with disabilities and the elderly. As mentioned in the *Kansas TransReporter* January 2014 feature article, “Improving Relationships with Underrepresented Groups,” transit agencies commonly use traditional communication, marketing, and outreach techniques that fail, in general, to recognize the diverse and unique communication needs of underrepresented groups. The article included great resources for increasing public involvement and partnership with underrepresented groups. This article builds on that by showcasing innovative ways rural transit providers have connected to underrepresented groups.

### **Recruit a coalition to identify needs**

Helena Area Transit Service (HATS) in Helena, Montana recruited a panel called HATS Inclusive Coalition to gauge transportation needs of target demographics—mostly persons with disabilities—and how to plan for those needs, long term. Coalition members seek opinions from user groups directly, by going to senior centers and places that employ persons with disabilities. They deliver questions personally to underserved stakeholders. This group will be an important contributor to the HATS Transit Development Plan. HATS plans to retain a transportation planner able to implement models to fit identified needs.

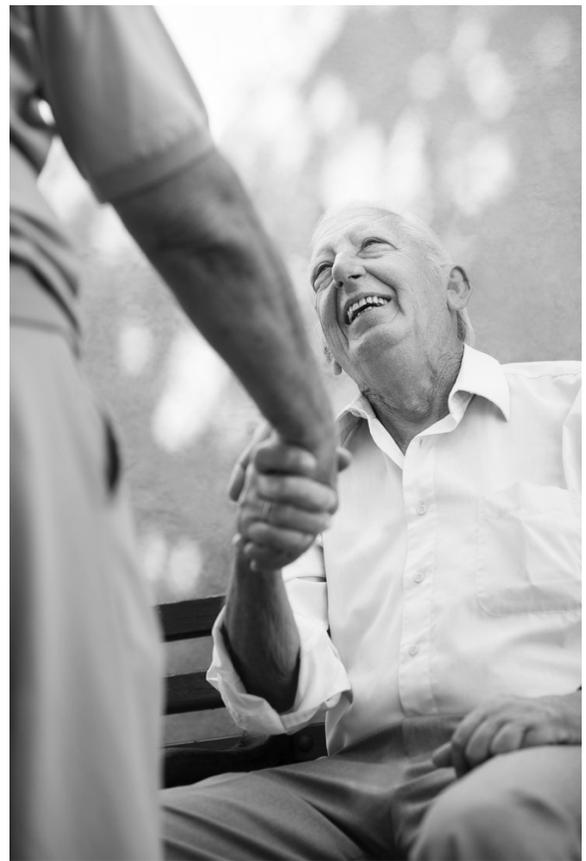
### **Invite input from target groups**

The Fayette County Ohio Transportation Program, located in rural

southwest Ohio, is using a grant to involve seniors directly in the process of planning new routes. The agency will use a synthesis of information regarding the target group’s needs to begin its first fixed route. Fayette County plans to reach 90 percent of nursing homes, assisted living, and senior agencies within their service area in the planning process. During development of the route, the agency’s mobility manager will set up and moderate a Facebook page to receive feedback. The county expects a 10 percent increase in trips by older adults and those with disabilities.

### **Establish a voucher system and obtain continuous feedback**

The Transit Ride Improvement Project (TRIP) of Columbia County (Wisconsin) has re-established a transportation council that includes riders, stakeholders, and provider groups. The council will head a grant project that will gather continuous feedback about transit needs. The project will also establish a voucher system that will make transit more accessible and affordable and will employ a mobility manager to analyze data from the program and improve system



*Many of the best practices for inclusivity involve face-to-face contact with the populations you wish to attract to your service.*

functionality as well as accessibility.

### **Coordinate a ride share program**

Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG) Area Agency on Aging (Tulsa, OK) covers unincorporated areas of Creek and Osage Counties. To better serve residents living in rural counties adjacent to Tulsa County, INCOG will determine the feasibility of a “bus buddies” ride share

*An agency near Tulsa is determining the feasibility of a “bus buddy” ride share program and will coordinate a volunteer program for those interested in providing rides for elderly residents.*

program and will coordinate a volunteer program for those interested in providing rides for elderly residents. This concept could be applied to various under-served groups to enhance their mobility.

#### **Develop a One-Call system**

Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc., located in mountainous northern Virginia, serves elderly and disabled persons in a service area with a 24 percent poverty rate. As part of a comprehensive plan to increase ridership in under-served groups, Mountain Empire has initiated a One-Call system that connects users to all transportation providers and modes, allowing providers and customers to do business through a single venue.

#### **Put under-served members in the “driver’s seat” for public input**

National Participant Network of Taos, New Mexico, is seeking to develop a public input model driven by under-served group members themselves. NPN will recruit and advertise to members of target groups, and will set up accessible meeting rooms for those with physical disabilities, low vision, hearing impairments, and environmental sensitivities. During the planning process, NPN will hand the entire planning process over to the groups within a general framework, allowing them to state their needs, the problems faced, and initial plans and strategies for accomplishing their goals. This will allow the users to be

the experts, with the planner there to give guidance and help with implementation.

#### **Open up to language accessibility**

Marin County Transit District, located in northern California, has a large and growing population of Spanish and Vietnamese speakers. The agency hopes to adapt its successes in reaching English speakers through personal contact by recruiting non-English speakers to participate in focus groups and advisory boards, and by increasing efforts to obtain feedback from non-English speakers. By using appropriate communication methods for different cultures, Marin County hopes to erode the barriers of language and culture preventing its under-served public from using their services.

#### **Now it’s your turn**

Where does your agency stand in actively including the different under-served groups in your area? Evaluating your goals and outreach strategies is crucial to laying an inclusive foundation for your transit organization’s mission and service model. By changing the way your organization views its outreach role and strategies, you may find new and valuable partners in increasing your service to under-served individuals. ●

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### **Sources**

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