



# Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

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

## 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



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

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).

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 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 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? ●



*Collaboration with Van Go lead 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.*

**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/>.

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