



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

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

Incorporating Marketing Strategies in Public Transit / Human Service Coordination Plans

As you coordinate your services, coordinate your marketing too.

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As a non-profit transit agency, promoting your services is less about what you do, and more about who you are. So it follows that promotion for a transit agency, and especially a small one, is less about traditional marketing, like advertising, and more about operating with the agency's values at the forefront of all of its activities.

What are ways you can effectively communicate your company's vision and mission? For a small agency, it is often best to put the marketing responsibilities into the hands of everyone. When stakeholders of your agency have common understanding of your agency's values and purpose, and are willing to work them into the community context, the goals of marketing (reaching and serving more people) becomes less of an expert task, and more of an attribute of your organization.

Many transit and human services agencies have seen developing human service coordination plans (see sidebar) as an opportunity to promote their services cooperatively, focusing on the needs of the community and how they can work together to better serve those needs. This article will

What is a Human Services Transportation Coordination Plan?

Human Services Transportation Coordination Plans are a provision of SAFETEA-LU, the predecessor to MAP-21. The federal government desired to enhance transportation services available to seniors, persons with disabilities, and those with low income by coordinating work between human services providers and transit agencies.

Coordination plans are required to receive federal funding, and must include representatives of transportation and human services agencies as well as the general public in the planning process. The enacting legislation also allowed for a mobility manager to be a federally eligible capital expense.

Coordination plans typically include information on relevant federal regulations, an overview of unmet transportation needs in the planning area, an inventory of existing transit and human services, strategies for coordinating overlapping services, and implementation and prioritization of new techniques.

Besides being required for federal funding, coordination plans provide an excellent opportunity and structure for local agencies to work together to serve their community. The plans can include ways that the cooperating partners work together to promote their joint efforts.

show how this can work by providing three examples of coordination plans that have outreach components.

Examples of marketing and promotion within coordinated services plans

1) Michiana Council of Governments Plan. MACOG, based in South Bend, Indiana, has several strategies for coordinating its services with marketing. The plan calls for stakeholder meetings for discussing the potential of coordinating services and transit trips held in common

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More Seniors Using Email

Many coordinated services plans emphasize mass communication as a strategy to raise awareness. When thinking about mass-promotion and information distribution among senior populations, email might be a better option than it might appear. 76 percent of older baby boomers (ages 56-64) use the internet, and 93 percent of those use the internet for email. Though only 58 percent of 65 to 73 year-olds use the internet, 90 percent of those who do are active in using email. As the population continues to age, it can be expected their ability to receive mass-communication via the internet will increase with these trends.

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by agencies, and the plan also encourages the stakeholder agencies to use their newsletters as a means of coordination and promotion. This allows the cooperating agencies to use each other's resources to reach more people who might need their services or need to learn more about services offered.

Another priority of MACOG is working with stakeholders to identify and coordinate area employers providing vanpool services to employees and having them cooperate to promote vanpool availability.

2) Island & Skagit Counties Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan. Skagit Transit, in northwest Washington State, promotes awareness of available services (dial-and-ride, vanpool, fares, etc.) on

its website (<http://www.skagittransit.org>). Island Transit, the other major provider in the area, also gives users the ability to sign up for alerts and take transit surveys at their website (<http://islandtransit.org>). The coordinated plan for these agencies includes an initiative to develop awareness-based marketing campaigns to promote the ways organizations in the community are encouraging the use of transit for their customers and employees, including assistance such as bus passes, gas vouchers, and subsidies.

The plan points out that a marketing campaign could be developed to promote transit services, but should only be undertaken if transit providers are confident they can continue to operate efficiently with increased demand. The overall goals identified in the plan for cooperative marketing include: maintain financial stability, preserve existing services, expand services to alleviate overcrowding, and provide service to new areas.

3) Washtenaw County-Ann Arbor Plan. Marketing of transportation services, especially those already available to the public, was a major need identified by this plan for the Ann Arbor, Michigan area. The plan recognized that increasing customer awareness is vital to meeting customer needs. The plan recommends placing public service announcements on radio and TV, and posting them on buses and at bus shelters. It also recommends cooperative promotion of available transit through agency websites, an informational phone line, and direct mail.

In sum

By using the common goals found in a coordinated services plan, transit providers can work together with other transit stakeholders in their area, instead of competing for the same customer base. We've shown you just a few examples above. By acting cooperatively, transit providers can provide much more benefit to the community than if they were all acting independently. Consider partnering with other providers in your service area to share advertising costs, share responsibilities, and reach out to new clients together. ●

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Sources

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