



Kansas RTAP Fact Sheet

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

Rodeo? No, Roadeo!

By Anne Lowder

First annual Kansas Transit Roadeo held in Manhattan, KS.



The word “rodeo” brings to mind horses and saddles, barrels and cowboys (or cowgirls). But a roadeo is something else, and the First Annual Kansas Transit Roadeo, held in Manhattan on August 2, 2015 demonstrated to Kansas transit managers and drivers some of those differences. While a transit roadeo, like the traditional rodeo, has a goal of showing off technical skills (in this case, driving) it also provides the opportunity to demonstrate just how safe, knowledgeable, and customer-friendly transit drivers really are when it comes to providing transportation to Kansas passengers.

The Roadeo was co-sponsored by KPTA and Kansas RTAP, and hosted by Flint Hills ATA. Each contestant completed a written test, demonstrated a pre-trip inspection and wheelchair securement, and then drove an obstacle course with vehicles provided by ATA.

Testing driving skills

The roadeo was held on a Sunday at Kansas State University’s football stadium using buses that weighed 14,500 pounds and were 22 feet long x 8 feet wide. The event, which is modeled after the Community Transportation Association (CTAA) National Community Transportation Roadeo, gave drivers an opportunity

to show off their driving abilities by testing their skills through nine obstacles that began with a right turn into a serpentine obstacle course marked by cones. Reco Clark, a rodeo volunteer, judge, and designated videographer, said this about the serpentine course: “This looks like it was a tough obstacle since many drivers missed the swerve cone and had to reverse to complete the obstacle.”

Other obstacles included a series of sharper 90-degree turns, reverse maneuvers, and dual clearance maneuvers in which obstacles become increasingly narrow as the driver passes through them. There was also a simulated passenger stop. The course ended with a short and quick stop, which required the bus to be going 20 miles per hour at a minimum before stopping within 6 inches of the cone.

Drivers maneuvered around orange cones and between ever-narrowing lanes delineated by tennis balls and traffic barrels. Without practicing before the competition, some drivers hit cones and sent tennis balls bouncing. Renee Bishop of OCCK, Inc. was the first driver out on the obstacle course and commented at the finish line: “This is harder than it looks.”

It is normal to hit a few cones, and no driver has ever made a perfect run, said B.J. Garcia, Sr. Manager of Transportation, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) and the event lead host. “The course is really tight,” he said.

While the driving challenges were many, the mood of the event was light-hearted. Tom Rodman, bus operations instructor for KCATA and the event’s Emcee/ announcer/ course builder, joked: “It’s been a tough day for the cones!” right before blowing his horn and announcing the next driver, similar to how the emcee for Ringling Brothers would announce the next show.

Not to forget: Wheelchair securement, pre-trip inspection, and the written test

Drivers could accumulate a total of 1,000 points: 525 points (52.5 percent) for driving, 200 points (20.0 percent) for wheelchair securement, 150 points (15.0 percent) for



Above, a roдео judge (orange shirt) scores a contestant who is securing a wheelchair into position inside the bus, while interacting with the customer.

pre-trip inspection and 125 points (12.5 percent) for the written test. Points were deducted for numerous reasons, including touching a cone, reversing when not required in an obstacle course, or going over the seven-minute time limit. Drivers were also judged on safety factors, such as seat belt use, smooth operation, and customer service during the wheelchair securement.

Wheelchair securement. The wheelchair securement track of the roдео is a seven minute competition where the contestant must greet the passenger in the same manner that any other passenger would be greeted who is boarding the bus. The contestant must then verbalize to the passenger the process and steps he or she is taking during securement. The goal is for the passenger to always be at ease and feel confident with the process. Contestants are scored on sensitivity and awareness, loading the platform, raising the lift and securement of the wheelchair and passenger.

Anne Smith, Flint Hills ATA director and wheelchair securement judge, noted that many drivers struggled with the wheelchair securement track as well as the customer service component, and noted that their experiences at the roдео mirror everyday challenges as a driver.

“The constant pressure to remain on schedule can take its toll on drivers, and the temptation do develop “short cuts” in order to save time is always something that drivers and administrative staff must guard against,” she said. Smith went on to say: “Safety can never be compromised for the sake of the schedule. This is where regular training opportunities like the transit roдео can play such a critical role.”

Pre-trip inspection. Another part of the competition included drivers inspecting a bus in seven minutes for four safety defects, which were pre-set by Mike



Roдео contestants (in yellow-green shirts) were given a walk-through of the obstacle courses before the start of the event.

Bohl, maintenance coordinator, Flint Hills ATA. Bohl announced his safety defects during the awards ceremony to many “Oh’s!” from the drivers. The four pre-set safety defects: 1) suspicious package, 2) one windshield wiper off, 3) a front lug nut off and 4) non-working right-side turn-signal.

Written test

The written test included 30 multiple choice questions. Questions for the test were taken from the National RTAP START training program. The START training program is designed to cover three elements that provide the foundation of knowledge needed for a transit driver: 1) vehicle inspections, 2) driving defensively, and 3) passenger assistance and safety.

The winners are....

Renee Bishop took first place and received a \$150 prize. Bishop has been an OCCK, Inc. paratransit bus driver for nine years. This was her first competition. About the roдео, she said, “I was very impressed. It was really well organized. It was a very good learning experience and lots of fun.”

Debbie Atkinson, Director of OCCK, Inc. said, “I am proud of Renee. She is a very conscientious driver. We have an excellent training program at OCCK. Safety is our number one priority and we spend a lot of time training our drivers. The bus roдео is good for all of the drivers’ morale to have drivers from various transportation companies get together and have fun in a competition such as this. The drivers all enjoyed themselves and are looking forward to competing in next year’s bus roдео.”

Wendi Vittitow took second place and received a \$100 prize. Vittitow is transportation coordinator with Butler County Transportation and has been a paratransit bus driver for three years. Vittitow said, “I was nervous at first, thinking ‘What am I doing here?’, but after completing the roдео and finishing in 2nd place, it was a proud moment for me. I never figured I would finish that well, having never competing in anything like this before. It was a great



A relatively new driver, Wendi Vittitow, at right, is all smiles as she receives the second place award from Anne Smith of the roadeo planning team.

and fun experience, and I believe everyone should try it.”

Michael Ott took third place and received a \$50 prize. Ott is a bus driver for Flint Hills ATA and has been a driver for three years. “The event was an excellent opportunity for drivers from other agencies to come together to exchange ideas, hone their skills, and enjoy each other’s camaraderie. The driving portion was the most challenging,” Ott said.

In Sum

The First Annual Kansas Transit Roadeo was a success. Bob Nugent, Director of Lawrence Transit, a member of the Roadeo Planning Committee, and judge for the Passenger Stop event summed it up well: “The event is for the employees who want to bring their families and show them what they do on a regular basis. And while drivers often get nervous while competing, the competition is laid back in nature and for bragging rights. They have fun more than they stress.”



Thanks to the Roadeo Planning Committee

Anne Smith, director, Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency
 Diane Lindsey, administrative assistant, Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency
 Kevin Riley, operations manager, Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency
 Diane Lindsey, office manager, Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency
 B.J. Garcia, Sr. manager of transportation, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
 Tom Rodman, bus operations instructor, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority
 Robert (Bob) Nugent, director, Lawrence Transit
 Connie Spencer, executive director, East Topeka Senior Center
 Pat Weaver, program manager, Kansas RTAP
 Anne Lowder, outreach coordinator, Kansas RTAP

The Roadeo is for celebrating our transit drivers. It is a hands-on training event that acknowledges the skill set and camaraderie of drivers across Kansas. See next page for tips on practicing for next year’s roadeo. ●

Reprinted from the October 2015 issue of the *Kansas TransReporter*, a publication of the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) at the Kansas University Transportation Center.

Sources

- National RTAP Bus Roadeo Toolkit. <http://nationalrtap.org/roadeo/>. Accessed 18 Aug. 2015
- National Community Transportation Roadeo Guide. Accessed 18 Aug. 2015. http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Roadeo_Guide_2014.pdf
- National RTAP START Training Program. Accessed 18 Aug. 2015. http://demopro.nationalrtap.org/resources/Training_Modules/634703469200736878_STARTLearner_TrMod_120.p.pdf
- Atkinson, Debbie, Director OCKK, LLC, email interview. 19 Aug. 2015.
- Garcia, B.J., Sr. Manager of Transportation, Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA), personal interview 2 Aug. 2015
- Bishop, Rene, Driver OCKK, LLC, e-mail interview. 19 Aug. 2015
- Vittitow, Wendy, Transportation Coordinator with Butler County Transportation, e-mail interview. 20 Aug. 2015
- Ott, Michael, Driver Flint Hills ATA, e-mail interview. 19 Aug. 2015
- Clark, Reco, Roadeo volunteer, judge and designated videographer, personal interview. 2 Aug. 2015
- Nugent, Robert, Director Lawrence Transit, e-mail interview. 18 Aug. 2015.
- Smith, Anne, Director Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency, e-mail interview. 27 Aug. 2015.

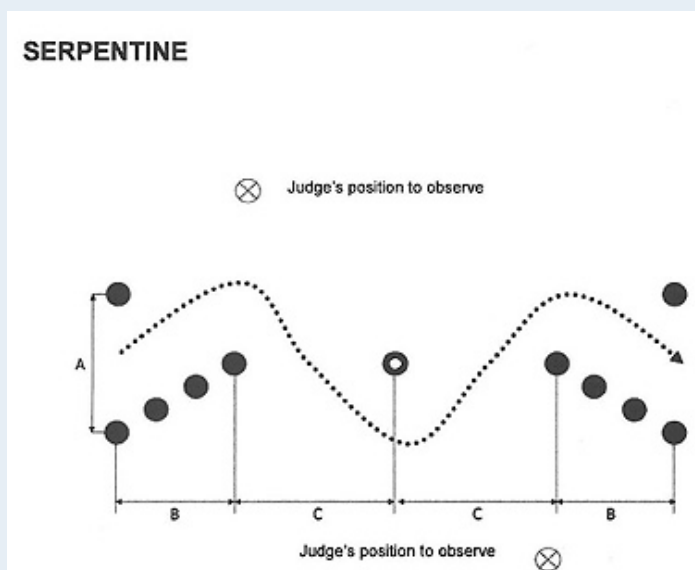
If Your Drivers Want to Practice Before Next Year's Rodeo...

Does setting up a complete bus rodeo obstacle course seem overwhelming? If yes, start small, with the pre-trip and wheelchair securement events. The prep for either of these events is minimal. Becoming expert in these two events, though, is a huge help for overall scoring.

Choose four basic defects for the competitors to locate during the pre-trip inspection, such as the four Mike Bohl chose for the rodeo (listed above). The *National Community Transportation Rodeo Guide* (see sources) makes scoring logical and easy to follow. Basically, in 7 minutes the competitor needs to find the four defects. Many other defects might be located but only the pre-determined four defects count.

Wheelchair securement (20% of the total score) is often an under-appreciated event by the competitors, but the customer service aspect of this event often trips up the best.

When you are ready to move on to setting up the driving obstacles, you can make it easier by just choosing one or two rodeo obstacle events to set up. The obstacle courses with the most cones (37 for each) are the Left and Right Hand Reverse. The obstacle course with fewest cones is the Passenger Stop with just two.



To set up the Serpentine obstacle course, refer to the *National Community Transportation Rodeo Guide's* diagram and instructions. You will need is a 100-ft tape measure and 11 cones.

Step one: Measure the bus. Length and width.

Step two: Set the first two cones for part A (see the diagram). (The distance between the two cones is the width of the vehicle plus 6 inches). If the width of your vehicle is 8 feet, the distance between the two cones is 8 feet and 6 inches.

Step three: Refer to Part B on the diagram. The measurement of the length of B on the diagram is the length of the vehicle. If the vehicle is 22 feet in length, the distance from cone A to the last cone for B will be the distance of 22 feet. Evenly-space these cones on an angle so that the last one is half the distance of "A" on the vertical axis, or in this case, 4 feet 3 inches.

Step four: The distance between the last cone of B to the turn radius cone of C is the length and half of the vehicle or 22 feet plus 11 feet in this case, for a total of 33 feet. This measurement is the same for both sides of the turn radius cone.

Step five: Repeat step three, making a mirror image of Part B.

Step six: Repeat Step two, making a mirror image of Part A.

The Serpentine obstacle is now ready for a trial run. The placement of the turn radius cone may need to be adjusted due to the turning radius of the vehicle.

Once completed, drivers can practice on the obstacle course several times, until comfortable. Then re-set the cones for another obstacle event.

If you want to go all-out in preparing for rodeo competition, set up the complete obstacle course and have a friendly competition with a neighboring agency!

Good luck and see you next year at the 2nd Annual Kansas Transit Rodeo. Date, time and location to be announced in a future *Kansas TransReporter*.