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FEATURE

Reno County Area Transportation’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

By Connor Mountford

In March 2020, every aspect of life in the United States was abruptly altered by the COVID-19 pandemic. At all levels, government agencies grappled with how to safely continue their operations. The abrupt shift in circumstances placed transit agencies in a particularly difficult situation as their services fundamentally involve transporting groups of people. Even though stay-at-home orders have been lifted and many aspects of pre-COVID life have resumed, transit agencies must adapt to a world where people are more cautious about their day-to-day activities and health. This article provides a profile of Reno County Area Transportation’s proactive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, how they innovated to continue providing service to their community, and tips for other transit agencies on preparing for potential future health emergencies.



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FEATURE

Local Government Finance for Rural Transit Professionals

By Connor Mountford

Local governments play an integral role in providing rural public transportation by serving on agency boards of directors, transportation-related committees, and providing administrative services. However, the main role of local governments in providing rural public transportation is providing funding for an agency’s local match.

In Kansas, Section 5310 and Section 5311 providers are required to cover 20% of their capital expenses and 30% of their operating expenses from revenue sources other than the United States Department of Transportation.¹ This article will help transit managers

¹ See Kansas RTAP article “How the KDOT Match Works” for more information on local matching requirements and eligible revenue sources.

understand the different types of local government, local government revenue options and trends in Kansas, and local government budgeting. Further, the article identifies key questions and information sources for transit managers looking to learn more about the local government

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environment in which they operate.

Local government 101

Cities and counties in Kansas operate under home rule, which delegates governing power to local governments with certain restrictions. Home rule allows cities and counties to perform many governing functions without the explicit direction of the state government.² While cities and counties often work together to provide many services, they have different jurisdictions and forms of government. This section provides information on common organizational structures and powers held by city and county governments.

The City Council

The city council is the main governing body for most cities.³ In general, city councils have the power to review the annual budget, enter into contracts, take on debt, regulate land use, and establish tax rates. The structure and powers of city councils are determined by the city's charter. In general, city councils differ in the following areas: number of members, term length, formal powers, compensation, and type of election.

Council-Mayor vs. Council-Manager

There are two main types of municipal government: council-manager and council-mayor. The main difference in these systems is the level of executive responsibility. Typically, the council-mayor form of government can be found in large, older cities. In this form of government, mayors may have the authority to initiate the budget process, appoint heads of departments, veto city ordinances, and they may even sit on the city council. The most common form of municipal government is the council-manager system. In this system, the city council is responsible for setting legislative priorities and creating policy, and a professional manager is hired to implement the council's policy and oversee the day-to-day operations of the city government. In most cases, the manager has the authority to develop the city budget and make recommendations to the council. City managers are hired by the city council and can be removed only by their authority.

County Government

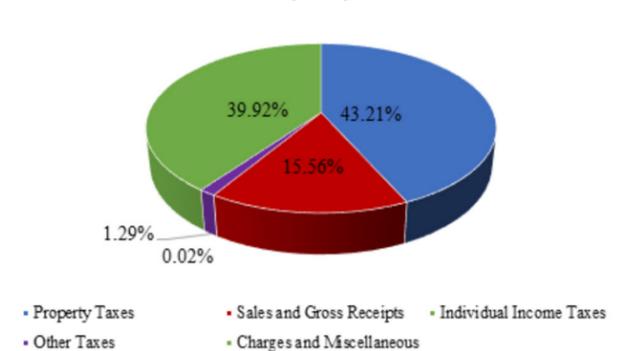
In Kansas, all 105 counties operate under a county

² For more information on home rule powers, see [Kansas Association of Counties](#).

³ City Councils are also often referred to as commissions.

Figure 1: Kansas Local Government Own-Source Revenue (2017)

Figure 1. Kansas Local Government Own-Source Revenue (2017)



commission system also referred to as the board of county commissioners. County commissioners are elected either at large or by district. Their powers include, but are not limited to, appointing county officials, creating commissions and boards, levying taxes, and administering elections. In some cases, a county executive may be employed to assist commissioners in the day-to-day operations of the county. For more information on the county government powers and restrictions refer to the [Kansas Association of Counties](#).

Tip from a Transit Manager: Do a Deep Dive into Your Budget

Barbara Lilyhorn, Director of Reno County Area Transit (RCAT), recommends taking a deep dive into your budget.

"If you know your budget, you will know your program and be able to speak to decision makers with a clear understanding of your financial needs..."

"For example, if you know what a set of tires cost and you know how many miles you run a bus each year and you can accurately project when you need to replace the tires - your funders are going to have a different level of trust in your figures than if you just present a report prepared by your financial assistant."

-Barbara Lilyhorn, Director of RCAT

Revenue options for local governments

Local governments generate revenue from intergovernmental transfers, tax revenue, user charges, and other miscellaneous sources. In Kansas, local governments generate approximately a third of their revenue from intergovernmental transfers such as state and federal grants. Own-source revenue, such as taxes and charges, account for the majority of local government revenue in Kansas. Figure 1 shows that the two largest own-source revenue generators for local governments in Kansas are the property tax and user charges. These are the most likely sources for local governments to use in providing local match funding.

Property taxes 101

Property taxes are an essential part of local government finance. Whether your agency's local match comes from the general fund or a dedicated mill levy, it is likely that property taxes generate a significant portion of your local match funds. Therefore, speaking the language of property taxes is essential for transit managers when working with local governments. Unfortunately, they can also be a complicated and confusing form of taxation.

The Constitution of the State of Kansas divides taxable property into two main categories: real property and personal property. These two categories are divided into subclasses and assigned an assessment rate.⁴ The assessment rate provides the proportion of the appraised property value that can be taxed. A county appraiser is employed to find the value of all property in the taxing jurisdiction. The appraised value is then multiplied by the assessment rate, producing the assessed value of the property. The assessed value is then multiplied by the jurisdiction's mill levy to determine the amount of property taxes for that property. An example of this process for a single piece of property is provided below:⁵

$$\text{Appraised Value } (\$100,000) \times \text{Assessment Rate } (11.5\%) = \text{Assessed Value } (\$11,500)$$

$$\text{Assessed Value } (\$11,500) \times \text{Mill Levy } (67.887) / 1000 = \text{Property Tax Value } (\$780.70)$$

One potentially confusing aspect of property taxes is the mill levy. A mill levy is simply the tax rate applied to assessed property values. A single mill is one dollar per \$1,000 of assessed value. In general, the mill levy for a local government is determined by taking the tax levy, or amount needed in taxes, and dividing it by the total assessed value of properties in the jurisdiction.⁶ That

⁴ See the State of Kansas Constitution for more information on property subclasses.

⁵ This example uses the assessment rate for residential property defined in the State of Kansas Constitution. The mill levy used in this example is hypothetical and does not represent actual mill levy of any jurisdiction in Kansas.

⁶ The mill levy used in this example is hypothetical and does not represent actual mill levy of any jurisdiction in Kansas.

value multiplied by 1,000 is the mill levy. An example of this process is provided below:

$$\text{Tax Levy } (3,678,900) / \text{Total Assessed Value } (30,000,000) = \text{Mill Levy } (0.12263)$$

The local government budget process

The budgeting process is used by local governments to create a plan for how to use their financial resources to provide services to their citizens. In general, this process includes administrative preparation, public input, legislative approval, and implementation.

In Kansas, local government budgets operate using the calendar year (January 1 – December 31). However, the State of Kansas operates using a fiscal year from July 1 – June 30. KDOT conducts an annual review of operating subsidy requests for the following year, using the state fiscal year. This review requires requesting agencies to have identified their sources of local match funding. So, it is important for local agencies that are requesting a portion of their local match from their local government to understand the budget process. Table 1 on page 4 shows the Kansas Department of Administration's recommended budget timeline for city and county governments.⁷

Another important consideration for transit managers is the type of budget used by their local government. While nearly all local government budgets include line-item budgeting, several other methods have become popular, including priority-

⁷ The dates in table 1 represent the last day for each task to be completed. Budget timelines may differ depending on the jurisdiction.

Tip from a Transit Manager: Budget Presentation

Depending on your jurisdiction's budget process, agencies may be required to present proposed budgets to elected officials. Anne Smith, Director of Flint Hills ATA, offered the following advice on presenting your budget request:

"Provide context for the data you offer, don't just throw numbers at them, they [local officials] hear numbers all day long, tell the story of transit and how it impacts the lives of their constituents"

-Anne Smith, Director of Flint Hills ATA

Table 1. Kansas Department of Administration Recommended Budget Timetable

Date	Task
Before July 1	Obtain the previous year's receipts and expenditures. Conduct trend analysis and start developing the budget.
July 1	Gather budget information
July 1	Prepare the first draft of fund pages
July 31	Prepare a working draft of the budget for governing body review
August 5	Publish notice of budget hearing and budget summary
August 15	Hold hearing and adopt the budget
August 25	Submit the budget to County Clerk

based budgeting, performance-based budgeting, and zero-based budgeting.

Priority-Driven Budgeting: A priority-driven budgeting (PDB) approach utilizes a collaborative, data-driven, process to rank services based on community priorities. Funding is then allocated according to these priorities.

Performance-Based Budgeting: Performance-based budgeting (PBB) is similar to PDB in that they both are based on community goals or priorities. The main difference between the two is that PBB introduces a level of service (performance) measure that elected officials can use to inform their decision-making year-to-year.

Zero-Based Budgeting: Zero-based budgeting (ZBB) is not used as frequently as priority or performance-based budgeting. ZBB requires departments to justify all programs and services in their budget. In general, it involves managers creating scenarios or "decision packages" that provide a minimal level of service, creating a budget request based on this level of service, and then building "decision packages" that bring the department back to its current or new level of service. These decision packages are then ranked, and budget decisions are based on these rankings.

Conclusion

Transit agencies and managers work with local governments on a variety of topics, including funding the federally required local match. Transit managers that have an understanding of local government structure, revenue options, and budgeting will be better positioned for success in their work with local government officials and staff. After reading this article, you should have an understanding of the important aspects of local government and be able to identify them in your community or jurisdiction.

Local Government Checklist

This article has presented you with general information to help you understand local government. Answering the following questions will help you to have a better understanding of the local government you work for/with:

- Local Government System and Structure**
 - Does your city use a mayor-council, council-manager, or hybrid system?
 - How are council members elected?
 - What are their term lengths?
 - Is the mayor independently elected?
 - This information can be found in the city's charter.
- Official Roles and Responsibilities of Local Government Staff and Officials**
 - What are the official roles of the manager/mayor?
 - Do they appoint department heads?
 - Is a council vote required?
 - Do they have a seat on the council?
- Local Government Revenue Sources**
 - What is the distribution of own-source revenue options?
 - Does your government rely heavily on any particular source?
- Local Government Budgeting**
 - What is your local government's general budget process?
 - What is the timeline?
 - Are performance-based budgeting or zero-based budgeting used?
 - What are the scoring criteria?

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Preparing for the pandemic

Barbara Lilyhorn, Director of Reno County Area Transportation (RCAT), said that they were able to take a proactive approach in planning for the pandemic response because of regular meetings between the Reno County department heads and the County Administrator. Although the intention of these meetings was not to plan for emergency response, information shared by the county health and emergency directors in late February and early March indicated that operational changes

may become necessary. Further, Lilyhorn had attended a Federal Transit Administration webinar and local emergency management training at which warnings were issued about the potential dangers of COVID-19. These early warnings prompted Lilyhorn and RCAT to create a "Contagious Disease Response Plan" and coordinate with KDOT on service changes.

Responding and adapting to COVID-19

Reno County's formal response

to the COVID-19 pandemic began in mid-March by convening daily meetings of the Local Emergency Planning Committee. Initially, these meetings consisted of representatives from each of Reno County's Emergency Support Functions, but other community stakeholders including elected officials, business leaders, and non-profit representatives, and the media were quickly invited. In total, 55 community stakeholders were brought together to provide updates and plan for how to respond to the

pandemic. On March 19, RCAT began implementing its own measures to combat COVID-19, including implementing the service provisions of their Contagious Disease Response Plan, social distancing on their vehicles, increasing their fleet cleaning activities, and providing community education on COVID-19.

Service Provisions

RCAT reduced its service in accordance with its Contagious Disease Response Plan beginning on March 24. This included reducing service hours for fixed route, paratransit, and on-demand services. Additionally, RCAT encouraged customers to limit their trips to essential activities such as medical appointments and grocery trips. On May 18, RCAT adjusted its services, increasing service hours for all service types and resuming four fixed-route lines on an hourly basis.

Social Distancing

Social distancing was achieved by sectioning off portions of each vehicle using caution tape and card-stock posters. These social distancing procedures are still in effect.

Fleet Cleaning

RCAT implemented extensive fleet cleaning measures to help ensure their customers' safety. First, they inventoried their cleaning supplies to make sure the active ingredients in their products were effective against COVID-19. Next, they began deep cleaning vehicles daily. Finally, they began requiring vehicles to be cleaned in between trips. RCAT drivers did these enhanced cleaning measures. This served the dual purpose of also keeping drivers at full-time status while service hours were being reduced.

Community Education

RCAT also took the opportunity to educate the public about COVID-19 at a time when many people were still unfamiliar with the disease. They printed posters from the Center for Disease Control that included information on COVID-19 and recommended health practices.

Innovating to meet unprecedented challenges

Like most of the country, Reno County and RCAT faced supply chain issues with personal protective equipment such as masks and hand sanitizer. However, the daily Local Emergency Planning Committee meetings gave community stakeholders the opportunity to connect and collaborate to solve issues. This collaboration resulted in the Reno County Volunteer

Center making over 20 masks for RCAT drivers. Similarly, they were offered assistance from a local brewery that had converted their operations to making hand-sanitizer. RCAT pitched in by working with the United Way and Reno County Food Bank to coordinate food deliveries to Fairfield High School where they were then distributed to surrounding communities.

Planning for the future

As the initial phases of Reno County's COVID-19 response come to a close, the Local Emergency Planning Committee meetings have become less frequent and now occur once a week. RCAT has begun increasing its services but is keeping increased cleaning and social distancing procedures in place. Lilyhorn says with the current team and plan in place, RCAT is prepared to shift services to meet future challenges related to COVID-19.

Key takeaways from RCAT's COVID-19 response

Barbara Lilyhorn and RCAT were able to continue to provide service during the COVID-19 pandemic through proactivity and collaboration. The following are some key takeaways from RCAT and Reno County's response:

Be proactive: RCAT took the advice of Reno County and federal officials to begin preparing for operational changes; coming up with a plan and coordinating with KDOT.

Focus on what you can do: Although RCAT couldn't provide their normal level of service, they were able to innovate and find ways to help; like transporting food from Hutchinson to Fairfield High School.

Fostering connection builds community: Bringing businesses and nonprofits into the daily planning meetings helped build connections that provided the foundations for a community-wide response. These connections resulted in RCAT coordinating with the community volunteer center to provide masks for drivers and a local brewery converting its operations to hand sanitizer production. •

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Greetings from RTAP Director

By Lisa Koch

Happy Fall Kansas Transit Providers! We have made it through a challenging summer and the team at Kansas RTAP is wowed and amazed by your work to respond to COVID-19 and support your passengers and communities. Thank you all for your outstanding work!



The Kansas RTAP office was given the opportunity to program and manage the Kansas Public Transit Association (KPTA) annual meeting, once it was decided that an online meeting was necessary. The meeting, which was transformed into a month of half-day sessions called "Transit Tuesdays," allowed us to explore topics of importance to you: Leadership, Emergency Planning, and Customer Service. With over 120 participants signed up, it was a great success and we thank you for your participation. It has given us many ideas for opportunities to provide training to you. If you have topics or thoughts about possible webinars, newsletter articles, or other trainings, send me an email at kolisach@ku.edu. We are here to provide the information that you need to help you with your work!

I hope you enjoy this newsletter. You will notice a few articles on local match and local financing; we hope this will be helpful to you during grant season. Please remember that Kansas RTAP has demographic information on our website to support your grant-writing. You can find it at <https://kutc.ku.edu/rtap> under the link "Kansas County Transit Dependent Demographics." Please reach out if you need assistance with this information. •

How The Match Works

By Connor Mountford

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides financial, technical, and research support to state and local governments. The FTA invests approximately \$12 billion annually through a variety of competitive and formula grants. These grants are categorized based on the type of support provided (research, operating, capital, and planning) and the size of community (urban or rural).

This fact sheet provides information on federal and state requirements for Section 5311 and Section 5310 formula grants for the enhanced mobility of seniors and individuals with disabilities recipients -- with a focus on matching requirements, eligible sources of funding, and considerations due to COVID-19. This fact sheet is intended for new transit managers and those looking to start a new transit service. Current transit managers may find the information presented in this useful as a quick reference guide.

U.S.C. 49 Section 5311 general requirements

U.S. Code 49 Section 5311 provides formula-based funding to local governments, and tribal transit providers in areas with populations under 50,000. Section 5311 grants may be awarded for the following purposes:

- Planning
- Public transportation capital projects
- Operating costs of equipment and facilities for use in public transportation
- Job access and reverse commute projects
- The acquisition of public transportation services, including service agreements with private providers of public transportation service.

U.S.C. 49 Section 5310 general requirements

U.S. Code 49 Section 5310 provides formula-based funding to assist private non-profit and eligible public agencies in providing transportation for elderly people and people with disabilities. The FTA makes both operating and capital funds available under this program. However, KDOT only makes Section 5310 funds available for capital projects. Instead, KDOT provides state operating assistance of between \$5,000-\$10,000 per year.



Coordinated Transit District Requirements

The Kansas coordinated transit districts act (K.S.A. 75-5051 through K.S.A. 75-5058) authorizes the Kansas Department of Transportation to create coordinated transit districts to “enhance the coordination and management of state and federal passenger transportation funds.” CTDs are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations that are the designated recipients of state and federal funds for rural public and specialized transportation in Kansas. K.S.A. 75-5057 requires all subrecipients to join a CTD in order to be eligible for state or federal funds. K.S.A. 75-5054 requires CTDs to perform the following duties:

1. Contracting with the department for receipt of funds which will enhance transportation coordination in the district;
2. Subcontracting with eligible agencies for provision of transportation; and
3. Monitoring the provision of transportation services in the district to ensure compliance with applicable federal and state laws and regulations.

For more information on CTDs in Kansas please visit: [Kansas Public Transportation](#).

Local match required for capital and operating expenses

Both operating and capital funding under Section 5310 and Section 5311 require a local match. This section will describe the matching requirements of each and their eligible expenses.

Capital Project Expenses: Capital project expenses are investments in new assets such as buses, vans, passenger shelters, preventative maintenance, wheelchair lifts and restraints. Both Section 5310 and Section 5311 capital projects are eligible for 80 percent federal share of the net project costs. The remaining 20 percent constitutes the local match and must be covered by grant recipient or subrecipient.

Operating Expenses: Operating expenses are the expenses directly related to the operation of the transportation system. Both Section 5310 and Section 5311 provide up to 50 percent federal match for the net operating expenses of a provider. KDOT provides additional requirements and funding regarding operating expenses for each of these programs. Table 1 provides information on the differences in how operating expenses are covered under KDOT rules.

How do local providers fund their match?

The Federal Transit Administration lists the following as options local providers may use to fund their portion of the match:

1. **State or local appropriations:** Transit agencies can access other state or local funds to assist with their portion of the local match. Additionally, agencies can use other federal funds as local match so long as those funds are not also provided by the United States Department of Transportation.

A few examples of this type of funding are non-emergency medical transportation and service contracts.

2. **Dedicated tax revenues:** Local governments can also dedicate tax revenue to fund transportation services in their jurisdiction. Since local governments rely heavily on sales and property taxes, it is likely that funding the match through dedicated taxes will require a rate increase from one of these two sources.
3. **Private donations:** Private donations must be formally documented and verified to count toward the local match.
4. **Net income generated from advertising or concessions:** Income generated from selling advertising can contribute to an agency's local match.

COVID-19 changes and considerations

On March 27th, 2020, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. This provided \$25 billion in funding to the Federal Transit Administration which is allocating \$2.2 billion to rural areas. The State of Kansas share of this funding is approximately \$38 million. The funding is being used to increase the federal share for all eligible expenses to 100 percent; therefore, no local match will be required.

CARES Act funding for transit includes operating, planning, and capital expenses normally eligible under the Section 5311 program. This funding is available for all expenses incurred after January 20th, 2020. According to the FTA, there is no deadline by which CARES Act funds must be spent.

Additional information on CARES Act funding can be found on the FTA's [frequently asked questions](#) webpage.

Table 1. KDOT Operating Expense Matching Requirements (Sections 5310 & 5311)

	Federal Portion	State Portion	Local Portion
Section 5310	0%	70%	30%
Section 5311	50%	20%	30%

Conclusion

Section 5310 and Section 5311 programs make federal funding available to eligible transportation providers for operating and capital expenses. Eligibility is determined through a mix of state and federal requirements, including requiring recipients and subrecipients to provide a portion of their own funding through a local match. In Kansas, the local match requirements are 20 percent for capital expenses and 30 percent for operating expenses in both Section 5310 and Section 5311 programs. In March 2020, the President signed the CARES Act in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This bill temporarily increases the federal funding share to 100 percent.

For more information, consult the article's sources below. ➤

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Using Electronic Vehicle Inspection Equipment to Improve Efficiency and Compliance

By Connor Mountford

Transit providers are required to comply with federal regulations, including conducting a pre- and post-trip inspection report. Historically, transit providers have used paper reports to comply with federal regulations. Today, many agencies are transitioning to digitally reporting their vehicle inspections. This fact sheet will provide transit managers with information on inspection requirements, electronic vehicle inspection equipment, how this equipment can improve efficiency and compliance, and how agencies can implement the equipment into their operations.

Vehicle inspection requirements

Federally funded transit agencies are required to take corrective action on any reported defect before the vehicle can be operated. Post-trip inspection reports must be retained for at least three months from the date the report was prepared. Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration regulation 396.11 mandates these reports contain:

1. A description of the vehicle
2. A list of any defects or deficiencies discovered by the driver that could affect safety operations. The following parts and accessories must be included in the report:
 - a. Service brakes including trailer brakes
 - b. Parking brake
 - c. Steering mechanism
 - d. Lighting device and reflectors
 - e. Tires
 - f. Horn
 - g. Windshield wipers
 - h. Rear vision mirror
 - i. Coupling devices
 - j. Wheels and rims
 - k. Emergency equipment
3. The signature of the driver

Electronic Driver Vehicle Inspection Report (eDVIR)

An electronic driver vehicle inspection report (eDVIR) takes the reporting process into the 21st century. eDVIR technology utilizes hand-held devices that connect to Cloud computing systems for easy collection, storage, and integration of data. eDVIR systems come in a variety of packages, ranging from app-based software to completely integrated software packages.

How will eDVIR improve my agency's operations?

eDVIR technology has the potential to drastically change fleet management operations through improved compliance and efficiency. Hard-copy vehicle inspection reports are cumbersome and prone to mistakes. A driver must fill out a paper form by hand and turn it in to her or his supervisor. Supervisors must ensure the report is properly filed and that any necessary corrective actions are taken. If maintenance is needed, it must be reported to the maintenance facility by phone or email. The maintenance facility would then need to consult their records on the vehicle and report back with an expected timeframe for repairs. This process can greatly delay maintenance times and result in a lower quality of service to customers.

Moreover, fleet managers have reported that many of their operators don't properly conduct their inspections. Instead, they rush through inspections or in some cases fill out a report without bothering to actually check any equipment ("pencil whipping"). This is not only an inefficient practice, as ignored defects increase the likelihood of a vehicle needing maintenance, but

Inspection Pre-Trips and Shift Change

In addition to the federally required post-trip inspection items, KDOT requires their drivers to conduct an inspection pre-trip and at a shift change. This inspection includes:

1. Exterior Body
2. Windows and Mirrors
3. Wipers/Blades
4. Lights and Reflectors
5. Tires
6. Undercarriage
7. Seat Belts and Safety Restraints
8. Cleanliness
9. Emergency Equipment
10. Emergency Door, Roof Hatch, Windows, Horn
11. Technology
12. Climate Control
13. Warning Lights and Gauge Levels
14. Accident Response Kit
15. Wheelchair Securement
16. Wheelchair Lift/Ramp

a dangerous one. Ignoring a serious defect increases the likelihood of a crash, which could injure passengers and cause a liability issue for the agency and operator.

eDVIR technology mitigates or eliminates these concerns. Some eDVIR systems include nodes that attach to the required inspection areas of each vehicle. These nodes

must be physically touched with the recording device for the operator to check off on an inspection area. Moreover, timestamps prevent drivers from simply touching each node without inspecting the vehicle. This works by compiling data on how long a normal inspection takes. If a transit manager notices an inspection that is significantly faster than average, they know the inspection was not up to agency standards. Employees, knowing this, would be more likely to complete their inspections thoroughly.

Once the inspection is complete, the driver uploads the report to the Cloud where it is stored. Depending on the software used, identified defects are either automatically forwarded to maintenance or can be sent within the application. In many cases, maintenance facilities will be able to access the vehicle's service record within the application, further streamlining the process.

Implementing eDVIR in your agency

The first step for managers interested in eDVIR technology is to ask the opinions of their drivers and maintenance staff, who will be using the equipment every day. Gather input on how they would use the technology

and whether they think it will improve their ability to perform their duties. Next, managers should contact their state department of transportation and inquire about the availability of technology grants or current statewide fleet/asset management plans. If the project is able to move forward, ongoing conversations, demonstrations, and trainings should be planned for drivers and maintenance workers, so their input is included throughout the procurement and implementation process. This will ease their transition to the new system of reporting and will provide transparency for those whose day-to-day lives will be affected.

Conclusion

Federal post-trip reporting requirements for transit providers can be burdensome to rural transit agencies that have few full-time staff. eDVIR technology mitigates these issues by streamlining the reporting process through electronic reporting, record-keeping, and the instant transfer of information. Transit agencies would be well-served to consider transitioning to eDVIRs but should solicit input from drivers and maintenance workers to ensure a smooth transition. ■

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KPTA Conference 2020

By Connor Mountford

In partnership with the Kansas Public Transit Association (KPTA), the University of Kansas Transportation Center recently hosted the annual KPTA Conference in a fully online format. The conference consisted of 14 unique sessions focused around three main topic areas: Leading in Tough Times, Emergency Planning for Public Transportation, and Customer Service. Further, the conference was delivered through an innovative "Transit Tuesdays" format that spread the sessions out over a four-week period with each week representing a different theme. The conference averaged 93 participants a day over the four-week period. ■

An Update of RTAP Training and Programs

By Anne Lowder

We are all facing uncertain and difficult times as we respond to the challenges presented by COVID-19. Kansas RTAP is dedicated to providing support, high quality training, and technical assistance to transit agencies as they adjust to new limitations and challenges in their work. We will continue to adapt our services to best meet your needs as guidelines surrounding COVID-19 are updated. Below are current opportunities for online training. If we can be of assistance in any way, please contact kutc_training@ku.edu.

KS RTAP driver's training in-person

An in-person training can be requested by an agency for driver training. Contact Anne Lowder alowder@ku.edu to request this training. Due to the availability of Enterprise Rental (only open on Tuesday in the area), I can do trainings on Wednesday and Thursdays.

Online training resources

In response to travel and training restrictions due to COVID-19, Kansas RTAP is providing e-learning to temporarily meet KDOT guidelines for operator training through December 31, 2020. The program is outlined at <https://kutc.ku.edu/online-training>.

To receive a Kansas RTAP Certificate, the driver would complete the trainings listed in one of the three modules and then email the certificates to alowder@ku.edu.

Q'Straint is offering virtual classes. The cost for the Q'Straint Basic Securement 101 is now \$49.99 with a bulk discount available.

Resources for live and archived webinars and downloads

There are many free or low-cost webinars and downloads hosted by other transportation centers, The National Transit Institute, and the Federal Transit Administration. KS RTAP has done the searching for you!

National Transit Institute

NTI's collaborative online learning events are free and are offered throughout the year on a variety of topics. Participants log into the webinar to access the visual content and either dial into a teleconference or use their computer speakers for the audio portion. Each webinar lasts approximately 90 minutes and includes a question and answer session. <https://www.ntionline.com/webinars/>.

Federal Transit Administration

FTA is hosting a series of listening sessions to support peer-to-peer exchange and information sharing on how the transit industry is recovering from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) public health emergency. The presentation and recordings from the first listening session, held on July 31, 2020, are now available on FTA's website.

The listening session focused on how transit agencies support the health, safety and confidence of transit riders during their COVID-19 recovery efforts. Panelists from the transit industry discussed strategies, service planning, tools, and resources they use to protect passengers and welcome them back to transit.

FTA is continuing its webinar series to provide technical assistance on the Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) regulation (49 CFR Part 673). FTA's upcoming webinar will provide states and transit agencies with sample approaches to addressing the PTASP regulation requirement for Management of Change. Note that transit agencies that qualify as small public transportation providers are not required to develop or implement Management of Change practices at their agencies.

CTAA Expo 2020 to be held in November

Louisville, KY, home of the ubiquitous Slugger, is the planned site for this year's CTAA conference. Information can be found here: <https://ctaa.org/expo-2020/> for the November 15-19, 2020 event. •

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If you know individuals who would like to receive our newsletter, please have them go to: www.ksrtap.org and sign up for the Kansas RTAP email list. There is a box to check to request electronic notification of each new issue of the TransReporter. Back issues are available at our website in the newsletter archives section.



The Kansas Transit Reporter is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the University of Kansas Transportation Center (KUTC). The newsletter is free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The Kansas Transit Reporter is co-sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Kansas Department of Transportation. The purposes of the RTAP program are to: 1) educate transit operators about the latest technologies in rural and specialized transit; 2) encourage their translation into practical application; and 3) to share information among operators.

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