



SUMMER 2023

KANSAS TRANSIT REPORTER

The Newsletter for Kansas Rural and Specialized Transportation Providers • University of Kansas Transportation Center

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Lisa Koch, Kansa RTAP



Happy summer and welcome to fiscal year 2024! We are now in year 36 of providing services to the transit agencies of Kansas and we are excited for a year full of programming. Here is a snapshot of what is ahead:

- As always, we will be offering six webinars per year. We are finalizing programming for an August/September webinar related to grant writing and our October webinar will be all about the KDOT grants!
- We will continue to do our CTD presentations; our soon to be published summer presentation will be on fuel tax exemptions!
- We will be finalizing our annual county demographic estimates and will have them on the website by the end of September.
- We are rejuvenating our Approved Trainer program and will have training of the new set of Approved Trainers in August!
- We are finalizing a guidebook on transit facility development; a resource that is discussed in this newsletter!
- Anne is out and about conducting driver training! We know that grants are due in November; check your driver's training status sooner rather than later so that you can get them signed up for training!
- And our newsletters will continue to bring a variety of resources to your agencies!

Speaking of the newsletter, we are so thankful to Cara Marcus from National RTAP for writing an article related to drug use on transit vehicles. Cara is my "phone a friend" anytime we get a humdinger question (and she always has a quick, thorough, and helpful answer!). If you haven't drilled into the National RTAP website, do not hesitate! Their resources are exceptional! Thank you, Cara and National RTAP!

As always, we are here to help you as you deal with the challenges of operating transit! Reach out anytime! We love these requests and often use them for future newsletter or presentation content! Happy Summer and thank you for all you do!

DRUGS ON THE BUS

By Cara Marcus, National RTAP

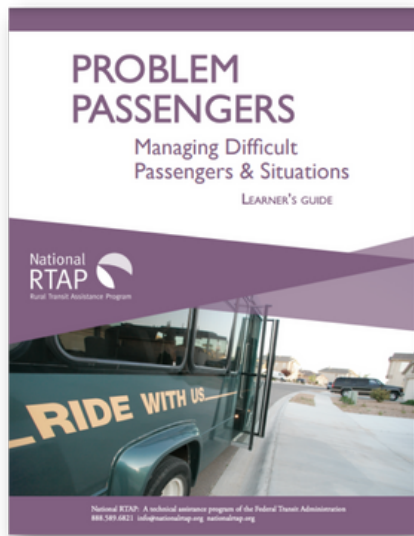
According to the most current data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 13% of the U.S. population has used illicit drugs within the past month and there were 70,630 overdose deaths in 2019. A difficult situation that many bus drivers face is passengers who use controlled substances before or during the bus ride. People under the influence of drugs may become disruptive or even violent. Drug use can radically alter a person's behavior -- someone under the influence is more likely to act



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unexpectedly and their behavior can change almost instantly. The worst-case scenario is the potential for drug overdose.

National RTAP provides guidance and recommendations for policies and best practices on this topic in its section on [Drugs on the Bus](#) in the Transit Manager's Toolkit and its [Problem Passengers: Managing Difficult Passengers & Situations](#) training module.



It is important that the transit agency includes in its policy statement guidelines for passenger behavior while using the transit services. For example:

- Illegal drugs are not permitted. We will notify law enforcement.
- At the discretion of the operator, any person intoxicated or under the influence of alcohol and drugs may be refused service.

Drivers should recognize that many passengers have various legal medications that can be easily misunderstood as illegal substances. If a person who is suspected of using drugs shows no signs of poor judgement or behavior, simply remaining aware and delivering the passenger to their destination may be the best outcome.

It is vital that the bus driver does not risk their or other passengers' safety when faced with a passenger using illegal drugs or behaving in an erratic manner. Drivers should be trained in responding to this type of situation as part of conflict management and de-escalation training.

Training should highlight:

- Drivers must be aware of the activities occurring on their bus and identify passenger behaviors that are disruptive, threatening, illegal, or constitute a medical emergency.
- A person under the influence of illegal drugs may respond with anger or behavior that quickly escalates towards a negative outcome. The driver should inform the passenger of the transit agency policy.
- The driver should report their observations to supervisors as soon as it is safely possible. Supervisors should inform management, who may choose to report the incident to law enforcement and request their assistance in processing the situation.
- The driver should treat the individual with dignity and respect, speak in a low, slow, and calm voice, and use body language that comes across as non-threatening.
- The driver should try to maintain a safe distance from the passenger.
- Emergency services should be contacted if someone under the influence becomes unconscious, has a seizure, or if the condition becomes worse in any way.
- Transit agencies should consider training for drivers and other staff on naloxone and other antidotes for opioid overdoses. Naloxone (the most common brand name is Narcan) can quickly restore normal breathing to a person if their breathing has slowed or stopped because of an opioid overdose, although it will not help anyone who does not have opioids in their system.

Transit agencies have initiated programs to distribute naloxone and provide training to their staff on its use. Some agencies have supplied their transit police with naloxone and trained them on its administration.

The Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA) collaborates with the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Board (ADAMH) of Franklin County and Southeast Healthcare to provide NaloxBox overdose rescue kits at three COTA locations. COTA is responsible for providing a safe location for the boxes and calling 911 if one is used. Maintenance of the boxes and staff training is provided through Southeast Healthcare. All COTA Transportation Services Supervisors and Strategic Response Specialists are trained to administer naloxone. One of these specialists recently administered naloxone to a passenger who stopped

breathing and the person was returned to a stable condition. [Read COTA's article for more information.](#)

On Rhode Island public transit buses, a campaign shares the message: Overdose Doesn't Mean It's Over. The goal is to share the lifesaving impact of naloxone and NaloxBox overdose rescue kits and show how anyone can be involved in the opioid response. The campaign is led by the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH), with support from the CDC Foundation. [Read more about this campaign.](#)

Industry training is available from organizations such as the Missouri Public Transit Association, which has provided [overdose education and naloxone distribution training](#). The [Rural Communities Opioid Response Program \(RCORP\)](#) is an initiative by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) aimed at reducing the morbidity and mortality of substance use disorder in rural communities at the highest risk and provide training and technical assistance.

Having the policies and training in place will help transit agencies prepare for and respond to situations, avert potential crises, and even save lives.

GTFS UPDATED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

By Payton Smith, Kansas RTAP

In 2022, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the updated National Transit Database (NTD) reporting requirements that would take effect in 2023. Of those requirements, General Transit Feed Specifications (GTFS) submissions have been made mandatory.

While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was amended to require the FTA to collect "geographic service area coverage," it is also good practice as GTFS reporting supports data interoperability (sharing data in a meaningful way) and has the potential to create a better experience for transit riders.

provides can be input into navigation and trip planning apps like Google Maps or Waze allowing easy and meaningful access to data such as routes and stop times from fixed route transit providers. GTFS is the world standard for publishing public transportation schedule data.

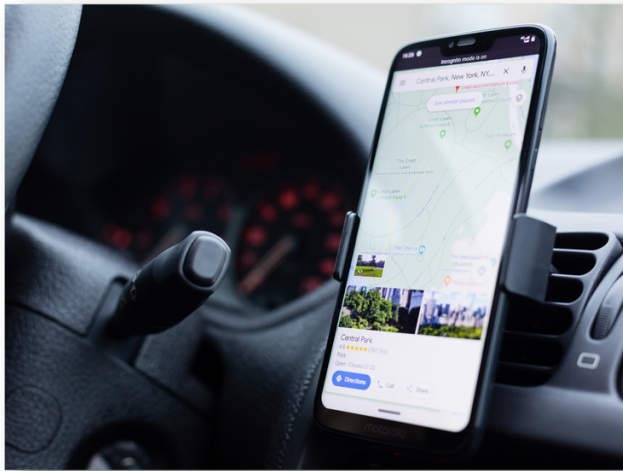
RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR DEVELOPING GTFS

WHAT ARE GENERAL TRANSIT FEED SPECIFICATIONS (GTFS)?

According to GTFS.org, "General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) is a data specification that allows public transit agencies to publish their transit data in a format that can be consumed by a wide variety of software applications," (GTFS, 2023). Because the GTFS format is universally accessible, the information it

While having access to GTFS data can be helpful to transit riders, producing GTFS data can be intimidating for transit providers. Luckily, there are lots of resources to support transit providers during the data development process. While most of the data needed to create a GTFS feed is already known by the transit provider, such as routes, stops, and stop times, knowing how this information fits into the format and structure of files of GTFS is not commonplace. GTFS.org provides a comprehensive list of file requirements and other information necessary to begin building a feed. GTFS.org also provides resources such as open-source web applications to help develop GTFS files, and trip planner websites in which to store the data.

Another helpful resource is the National RTAP GTFS Builder. National RTAP provides a free guidebook, builder support, and GTFS support Thursdays a weekly online office hour where providers can meet with instructor, share their screen, and ask questions regarding GTFS development. This resource provides transit providers with support through the entire process from guidance on what information you will need to get started, to future care and maintenance for your GTFS feed.



WHAT ARE THE UPDATED REPORTING REQUIREMENTS?

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law amended 49 U.S.C. 5335(a) to require FTA to collect “geographic service area coverage” data through the NTD. The FTA has decided that the best way to do this is for transit providers to submit GTFS data when reporting to the NTD. Reporting requirements will be implemented in two phases: development, and maintenance.

The development phase consists of NTD reporters establishing a web hosted GTFS dataset for their fixed route services and submitting it to the NTD in RY 2023. This one-time requirement consists of several components;

- Compressed (.zip or ‘zip’) archive file containing required text files as specified by GTFS Data Requirements. (Further details about text files available in data requirements section)

- One or more published weblinks that are persistent (static), machine readable, and not password protected which host the GTFS data. (Exceptions can be made if the agency is able to demonstrate that hosting a weblink is not possible.)

The maintenance phase beginning in RY 2024 consists of the reporter maintaining the above data to reflect the most recent services available and updating when necessary. Then the reporter must certify annually through the D-10 form that the web link is up to date.

HOW CAN AN AGENCY FULFILL THOSE? WHAT ARE THE DATA REQUIREMENTS?

GTFS has the ability to be robust and dynamic, but NTD is not asking for the full capabilities of GTFS to be used. The goal of the GTFS reporting requirement is to fulfill the BIL’s geographic service area coverage data collection standard, making static GTFS feed a reasonable and appropriate option. NTD GTFS feed standards will be utilizing the feed specifications from the international GTFS standard.

GTFS ensures data consistency by establishing minimum requirements. Specifically, GTFS requires that an overarching compressed file contain, at a minimum, seven underlying text files:

- (a) Agency;
- (b) Stops;
- (c) Routes;
- (d) Trips;
- (e) Stop Times;
- (f) Calendar or Calendar Dates.txt; and
- (g) Feed Info.txt.

An eighth file, Shapes.txt, is optional, but it is recommended to make the files more useful for geospatial mapping purposes. Additionally, within each file, some fields are noted as “optional.” Optional fields are recommended by the GTFS feed specification since they improve the usefulness of the datasets for data users, but transit providers reporting to NTD only need to include files that are listed as required to comply NTD reporting standards.

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RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR REPORTING

While reporting GTFS information is new, there are resources available to assist transit providers in reporting correctly. One helpful tool is to validate your GTFS link. After you have gone through the process of creating a GTFS zip file, it can be uploaded to a validator, a tool that compares the uploaded GTFS file against the schedule standard. A validation report will be produced which will provide information regarding how well the input GTFS files formatting and field specification compares to the standard. While this step is not required by reporters from NTD, it is a useful tool to double check your work. If the file meets the validator qualifications, it will meet the NTD qualifications, and it is possible for NTD to use a validator to check providers GTFS feeds.

CONCLUSION

The FTA's new reporting requirements for the NTD are expected to help improve the experiences of transit riders, but trip planning is just scratching the surface of GTFS capabilities. With new GTFS in development such as Flex, Fares, and Pathways the future of GTFS is

more than just trip planning, having robust and accurate data will allow Planners and Policymakers to better understand how transit is utilized in their communities. These new requirements are new for everyone and the process for reporting them is still fresh. However, using the resources provided will assist in making this transition as smooth as possible, and open the door to the possibilities of GTFS.

RESOURCES

General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2023, from <https://gtfs.org/>

GTFS Builder Support. (n.d.). National RTAP. Retrieved July 17, 2023, from <https://www.nationalrtap.org/Technology-Tools/GTFS-Builder/Support>

National Transit Database Reporting Changes and Clarifications. 87 Fed. Reg. 40582. (proposed July 7, 2022)

National Transit Database: Reporting Changes and Clarifications. 88 Fed. Reg. 13497. (proposed March 3, 2023)

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NEW COALITION LEVERAGES NATIONAL AND STATE EXPERTISE TO IMPROVE TRANSIT COORDINATION

By Lisa Harris-Frydman, Kansas RTAP



“Welcome to the Kansas Coalition for Accessible Regional Transportation (K-CART), a collaboration of the Kansas Mobility Management Program and other K-CART Coalition stakeholders, with support from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC).”

The above is the project statement from K-CART, a new coalition formed in Kansas to improve transportation coordination for medical and health-related trips. This article will highlight the Coalition’s purpose and progress to date. We hope it will inspire you to read more about what the Coalition is doing. Its work is particularly relevant to Coordinated Transit Districts (CTDs) in Kansas, as the results of their work can be adapted for use in other districts.

MISSION AND FOCUS

The Coalition has a broad mission of improving access to medical transportation for all Kansans, but they targeted their initial efforts to a more focused population. They centered on older adults and people with disabilities, with the aim of increasing access to medical and other health-related trips by decreasing barriers to coordinated service.

Linking medical transportation services across service boundaries and barriers has been attempted in Kansas for many years, with some success and many setbacks. K-CART aims to create more success through a step-by-step process for:

- Getting the right people engaged
- Educating them about the health benefits of access to transportation services
- Involving them in planning and implementing coordinated services, and
- Marketing coordinated service for better visibility and recognition.

WHO ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE K-CART COALITION?

The members of the Coalition include six Kansas Mobility Managers from across Kansas and a cross-section of professionals from various industries related to health care and medical trips in CTD 1 (Topeka and Lawrence areas). Member organizations are:

Cottonwood, Inc.
Douglas County, KS
East Topeka Senior Center
Jayhawk Area Agency on Aging
Kansas Department of Transportation
Kansas Department of Health & Environment
Kansas Mobility Management Program
City of Lawrence, KS
Lawrence Presbyterian Manor
Lawrence Transit
Papan's Landing Senior Center
Senior Resource Center for Douglas County
TARC, Inc.
Topeka LULAC Senior Center
Topeka Metro
Topeka Presbyterian Manor
Urban Corridor Coordinated Transit Council (CTD 1)

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THIS COORDINATION PROJECT?

K-CART brings a fresh approach to coordination in the following ways:

The project received national advice and support.

The project started with a technical assistance request from the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) by the Senior Resource Center (SRC) for Douglas County (a 5310 provider), the Kansas Mobility Management Program, and a dozen existing collaborating agencies (aka the Coalition). The request process was competitive and the Coalition was one of two groups NADTC selected that year (2022).

The Coalition's goal was to develop a service model (and supporting educational and marketing materials) that could fill in the gaps for older adults and people with disabilities to ensure they have a way to get to and from medical appointments and other health-related activities. They wanted services to be affordable, accessible, and to cross existing boundaries.

NADTC sent two staff members to Kansas in September 2022 to facilitate a two-day workshop to kick off the project. From there, the Coalition established a tight, 6-month timeline to develop an Action Plan that could be piloted, develop marketing and communication materials, and to get the pilot ready to launch.

Mike Spadafore, Mobility Manager for the Topeka/Shawnee County area of CTD 1, said NADTC provided invaluable advice and support for the project. "Our Coalition received ongoing monthly check-ins with NADTC staff and intensive technical assistance," he said.

All mobility managers in Kansas participated. The project benefited from the expertise of six mobility managers in Kansas, each of whom brought experience and unique skillsets to the task.

The Coalition developed a strategic approach for engaging stakeholders. The Coalition identified

Continuum of Care team members as key stakeholders. The Coalition's Action Plan report states: "In the medical field, a Continuum of Care Team includes hospital leadership, social workers, nurses, and providers. They work with specialized areas across the health system to understand each patient's care needs and support community partners in meeting those needs. Their input will be invaluable in the Coalition's work as we conduct outreach and education efforts, and their knowledge and experience will better inform the ways that transit providers assist their riders."

Consistent messaging was developed. The Coalition developed a vision statement, project summary statement, "elevator pitch" and a logo. These can be used to help a CTD start talking about transit coordination. In their final report, the Coalition states: "Having a consistent message that all Coalition members can use when promoting K-CART to elected officials, funders, and program participants will be key to ensuring that we are all sharing the same set of information across the region. We also believe that it will take some of the pressure off members in trying to get the conversation started as they promote our work." They have also developed educational tools about the benefits of coordination.

An Action Plan for coordinated service was developed and will be piloted. CTD1 will pilot the Coalition's Action Plan and share results. Other CTDs that choose to use and adapt the Action Plan can learn from the experiences in the pilot.

WHAT DOES THE COALITION'S ACTION PLAN CONTAIN?

The Coalition's Action Plan is based on selected components of NADTC's [Coordination Committee Toolkit](#). These components included a needs assessment, readiness assessment, stakeholder and community asset mapping, and ideas for communications and messaging. They also adapted NADTC's framework and tools for developing transportation coordination strategies.

The Coalition's Action Plan sets the stage for coordination by taking a CTD through a series of steps to assess local

transportation resources and existing coordination barriers, strategically identify and engage potential stakeholders, and educate stakeholders in how transportation enhances health outcomes. The Plan has several ideas for how to reach key people and keep them engaged in creating transportation coordination as a way to further positive health outcomes.

The Action Plan also contains a series of steps for developing a regional coordination service that engages stakeholders and others in the community in breaking down barriers to coordinated service in a CTD.

STATUS OF THE COALITION'S WORK, AND NEXT STEPS

The Coalition has finished its first major task, which was creating their Action Plan report. A link to this report is in the Sources below. The report describes the process of developing the plan, why the Coalition chose medical/health trips and their target audience, the Action Plan itself (i.e., steps for developing a coordination plan at a CTD) and what's next for the Coalition as its members continue to advance coordination in Kansas.

The next part of their work, starting in summer 2023, is implementing the Action Plan in CTD1.

In their report, the Coalition shared several practical lessons they learned when developing the Plan, mostly centered on keeping the scope manageable and being strategic about whom to invite as a stakeholder in creating coordinated transit service for medical trips.

CONCLUSION

A group of dedicated transportation professionals and medical professionals in Kansas have banded together to increase healthy outcomes for Kansans through their participation in the K-CART Coalition. They have developed an Action Plan for transportation coordination that will be piloted soon in CTD1. The Coalition has designed its work so that it can be used and adapted by other CTDs to advance transportation coordination in their own regions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Coalition's Action Plan report is at the link below. We also included a link to presentation slides prepared by the Coalition. All of the current mobility managers in Kansas are members of the Coalition and would be happy to answer any questions. You can find their contact information at <https://ksrides.org/our-team/>.

RESOURCES

K-Cart Action Plan (final), March 2003.
<https://ksrides.org/wp-content/uploads/K-CART-FINAL-report.pdf>

K-CART Presentation Slides, March 2003.
<https://ksrides.org/wp-content/uploads/K-CART-final-presentation.pdf>

Kansas Rides! "Our Team" page. <https://ksrides.org/our-team/>

April 12, 2023 interview with Mike Spadafore, Mobility Manager for the Topeka/Shawnee County Area in CTD 1.

PARTNERING WITH YOUR LOCAL PLANNING OFFICE

By Lisa Koch, Kansas RTAP

At our April 2023 Kansas RTAP Advisory Board Meeting, a member recommended that we write an article about partnering with local planning offices. As a professional planner, I jumped at the opportunity to tell you about the

resources that are available to you by reaching out to your local planning office. I hope after reading this, you reach out to your local planning staff to form a partnership.

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Community planning allows a local government to determine the best use of finite resources, including generated tax revenue, natural amenities such as water resources, agricultural land or parkland, and the demand and utilization of different land uses. Community planning is implemented through collaboration by elected officials, appointed officials, staff, and the public. This collaboration results in large efforts, such as a comprehensive plan, or smaller efforts, such as public hearings about development proposals.

THERE ARE SPECIFIC KANSAS STATUTES RELATED TO CITY AND COUNTY ZONING

Statutes related to City Planning are in Chapter 12, Article 7
(http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/statute/012_000_0000_chapter/012_007_0000_article/)

Statutes related to County Planning are in Chapter 19 Article 29
(http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/statute/019_000_0000_chapter/019_029_0000_article/)

The role of a city or county's planning work is often dependent on the population of the area. Rural and frontier cities and counties may focus on zoning, the practice of delineating specific geographic areas for specific uses within a jurisdiction. In addition to zoning, cities and counties in Kansas are required to have a comprehensive plan, which must be reviewed and updated annually. The requirements for what must be included in a comprehensive plan are outlined in Kansas Statute.

Cities:

http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/statute/012_000_0000_chapter/012_007_0000_article/012_007_0047_section/012_007_0047_k/

Counties:

http://www.kslegislature.org/li/b2023_24/statute/019_000_0000_chapter/019_029_0000_article/019_029_0058_section/019_029_0058_k/ The assessment of transportation facilities of all types (including public and specialized transportation) is a required element in comprehensive plans.

Planning Staffing at the municipal level is dependent on the size of the community and the amount of potential development. While larger cities may have a Planning and Community Development Department that has personnel who focuses on development review, long range planning, building inspection and floodplain mapping, smaller municipalities may have one or two staff members that cover all these items.

As your agency puts together its annual grant application to KDOT, there are many ways that your local planning department can help you. First, the local planning office is the best resource for local demographic data and may have demographic projections for future years. Additionally, the local planning department can help you to identify current and future developments that could generate transit demand, such as social service organizations, medical facilities, education facilities, major employers, and retail. Because planning departments host many public hearings for development approvals, staff can give you tips for planning your required public notice and hearing.

Required Elements in City or County Comprehensive Plans in Kansas:

- Location, extent, and relationship of land uses.
- Population and building intensity standards.
- Public facilities, including transportation facilities.
- Public improvement programming.
- Major sources and expenditures of public revenue.
- Utilization and conservation of natural resources.

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If you are considering the development of a maintenance/administration facility, one of your first meetings should be with the local planning department. They can help you to identify potential locations and can help you assess what improvements are necessary to construct on identified properties. Also, they can instruct you on the city's development code and developmental review process.

In urbanized areas of Kansas, there is an additional resource related to planning called Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). MPOs are developed to support the coordination of transportation planning and expenditures. MPOs are required in areas with a population of 50,000 and above. The MPOs in Kansas are:

- Mid-America Regional Council – serving the bistate area of Kansas City (including Wyandotte, Leavenworth, Johnson, and Miami counties in Kansas) <https://www.marc.org/>
- St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization – serving the bistate area of St. Joseph, Missouri (including the cities of Elwood and Wathena in Kansas) <https://www.stjosephmo.gov/863/Metropolitan-Planning-Organization>
- Lawrence-Douglas County MPO – serving the urbanized areas of Douglas county <https://lawrenceks.org/mpo/>
- Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization – serving the urbanized areas of Shawnee county <https://topekampo.org/>

- Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization – serving the urbanized areas of Geary, Pottawatomie and Riley counties. <https://www.flinthillsmopo.org/>
- Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization – serving Sedgwick county and urbanized portions of Butler and Sumner county. <https://www.wampo.org/>

MPOs work directly with federally funded transit agencies to carry out federal metropolitan planning requirements. These requirements include regional planning and coordination related to allocation of funding.

There are many instances when an MPO, a transit agency, and a city/county planning department coordinate. In an email interview with John Verssue, a Long-Range Planner in the Community Development Department at the City of Manhattan, he described points of coordination: "In addition to individual data requests and information sharing, all three departments utilize each other for long-range project input, including transportation system planning, route, stops, and schedule feedback, and mapping requests. Partnership projects have included or will include the Housing Market Analysis, Safe Routes to School, the Beyond Tomorrow Downtown Plan, the district Loop effort, and others."

If you haven't already, schedule a visit to your local planning office to see how your agency and their agency can coordinate. And if you are interested in knowing more about public transit planning, check out our recent webinar on the topic: <https://youtu.be/skNr40KT25A>

POLICY SPOTLIGHT: SERVICE ANIMALS

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Service animals are essential as they are specially trained to help individuals with various disabilities. Whether it is aiding a person with vision impairments, hearing impairment, or alerting someone who has a medical condition, service animals are a vital part of people's lives. In this policy spotlight, we will explore and define service animals under the Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation, emotional support animals, psychiatric service animals, misconceptions about certification and registration, what local governing bodies can and cannot require, and the care and responsibility of the service animal.

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DEFINITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

As of March 15, 2011, the Department of Justice (DOJ) defined a service animal as “a dog that has been individually trained to do work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.” The dog can be any breed or any size dog that has been trained for a task specific to that person's disability. In some cases, provisions have been made for miniature horses to be used as service animals if they meet certain assessment factors of 1) trained to help a person with disabilities, 2) housebroke, 3) the facility can accommodate the size and weight, and 4) not interfere with the safety of operation. You can see a service miniature horse in action in this YouTube video: (2) [Miniature Horses Allowed As Service Animals On Airplanes - YouTube](#)

While DOJ limits a service animal to a dog and sometimes a miniature horse, the Department of Transportation (DOT) does not limit the species of the animal. The DOT's Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.3), “service animal is defined as any guide dog or other animal individually trained to work or perform tasks for an individual with a disability.”

A service animal can perform many tasks that help a person with their disability. Examples include retrieving objects for a person who uses a wheelchair, guiding a person with vision impairments, alerting a person of a seizure, or reminding a person to take medicine.

Emotional support animals are not service animals. ADA considers emotional support dogs as not trained to perform a task but “provide comfort passively, by its nature, or through owner's perception.” ADA.gov does define a psychiatric service animal “as a dog that has been trained to sense that an anxiety attack is about to happen and take a specific action to help avoid the attack or lessen its impact.”

CONSIDERATIONS

The misconception about service animals is that they need to be professionally trained, registered, licensed, and required to have identification and vest. ADA says no to the above. The animal can be either trained by the owner or a professional trainer. The service animal is not required to wear or have any papers identifying the animal as a service animal. The service animal, though, is not exempt from local ordinances such as animal control and public health requirements, dog licensing, and registration requirements. ADA does not make exceptions for dog breeds, and local governments must allow the service animal even if they have locally banned a certain breed of dog.

Employees can ask two specific questions: 1) Is that animal a service animal, and 2) What task has the animal been trained to do?

Employees cannot require the service animal to perform the task or ask about the person's disability.

The service animal must always be under the control of its owner. This means leashed or harnessed. In some cases, the animal needs to be able to perform its service off-leash. An example would be a person with PTSD entering enclosed areas who sends the dog in first to check that no threats exist.

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Employees are not responsible for caring for the animal. If the dog is posing a direct threat to others such as growling, barking, or snapping, the dog may be suspended but employees still need to provide services to the owner. If the dog barks once or is provoked, this is not a reason for suspension. The dog cannot be suspended based on general fears of a certain breed. The suspension must be due to that dog's behavior.

If a person thinks they have been discriminated against under ADA because of their service animal, they can file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice or file a private lawsuit in a federal court.

WHAT ARE YOUR PEERS DOING?

OCCK Inc Transportation: General Public Transportation Passenger Guidelines January 2023 [Passenger-Guidelines-2018-large-size-revised-January-2023.pdf \(salinacitygo.com\)](#) Service animals are allowed to accompany you. Please inform the OCCK, Inc. Dispatcher when scheduling the trip that a service animal will be accompanying the passenger.

- Your animal must be on a leash and remain under your control.
- The animal must remain at your feet. The animal may not sit on a seat.
- The animal must not be aggressive toward people or other animals.
- You are responsible for any damage or soiling caused by the animal. Passenger

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Small family pets are allowed but must be in a pet carrier/taxi. Please inform the OCCK, Inc. Dispatcher when scheduling the trip that an animal will be accompanying the passenger.

ATA Bus Manhattan, KS
[FAQs • Riley County • CivicEngage \(rileycountyks.gov\)](#)

For policy purposes, animals are considered either service animals or pets. Service animals will be transported with their owners without restriction or extra cost. Service animals must be supervised, and the owner/handler must retain full control of the animal at all times. Owners/handlers are responsible for cleanup of any waste or litter caused by the service animal and is liable for any damages the animals cause.

Pets may be transported with their owners if the pets are secured in an enclosed container and if they can be fit into the schedule. Pets have the lowest priority for transportation. Pets requiring emergency veterinary assistance will not be transported. An ill service animal is treated as a pet in this respect: such animals are not performing their service function.

Finney County Transit City Link Ridership Policies and Guidelines July 2019

[WEB PDF GuideLines CITY LINK Brochure - ENGLI.pdf \(wsimg.com\)](#)

11. Pets/Service Animals: No animals other than service animals are allowed on the bus for any reason. A "service animal" is defined as an animal that is individually trained to perform a specific task for a person with a disability. Service animals include, but are not limited to, animals that guide individuals who are blind, alert individuals with hearing disabilities, pull wheelchairs, or carry and pick up things for persons with mobility disabilities. Comfort or therapy animals that are used solely to provide emotional support are generally not considered service animals under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Wichita Transit Riders Guide: Bus Etiquette
[Rider's Guide Frequently Asked Questions \(wichitatransit.org\)](#)

Service animals are permitted on Wichita Transit vehicles. When you board the bus, you must declare that the animal you're bringing onboard is a service animal. If you do not have a service animal but a pet in an APPROVED pet carrier, like a "pet taxi" (contained so that it can't get out), you can bring it on the bus.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Service Animals are essential companions for people with disabilities. They play a critical role in helping their owners achieve greater independence, improve their quality of life, and provide health benefits. Though emotional support animals are not recognized under ADA, some agencies allow the animals if they are in a carrier. Overall, agencies across Kansas have good policies concerning adhering to ADA on service animals.

- Maintain training for employees so they understand how to interact with an owner and their service animal by asking the appropriate questions.
- The animal needs to be under the control of the owner.
- Do not have to produce documentation of certification papers.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

RESOURCES

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CONSTRUCTION PROJECT MANAGEMENT GUIDEBOOK FOR SMALL TRANSIT AGENCIES GUIDE TO BE PUBLISHED BY KANSAS RTAP THIS SUMMER

By Lisa Koch, Kansas RTAP

Has your agency been thinking about building a maintenance facility? Many of your peer 5311 agencies in Kansas have, thanks to KDOT's Access, Innovation and Collaboration (AIC) program! The KDOT AIC program mixed federal 5339 Bus and Bus Facilities funding with state public transportation funding to allow agencies to apply for projects that are generally hard to fund through existing mechanisms. With so many agencies taking advantage of AIC to construct maintenance facilities, it was time for Kansas RTAP to provide a resource to help agencies through the process. This guide, which will be published in late summer 2023, will be a helpful resource for agencies that are new to the construction process.

The problem was clear: the Federal Transit Administration's guidance on facility development was focused on large rail agencies with substantial projects. Small transit agencies found themselves buried in the guidance and insecure about making, what to them was, a large investment with very murky information. The KDOT Office of Public Transportation developed a spreadsheet that helped agencies through the process, but even that spreadsheet was challenging to understand for agencies that had never done such a project. A guidebook was needed as a partner to



Figure 1: Graduate students Karsh Bhatt (center) and Payton Smith (left) get a tour of Flint Hills ATA's Transit Maintenance Facility by Executive Director Anne Smith (right) Photo Credit: Lisa Koch

KDOT's spreadsheet.

The development of the "Kansas RTAP Construction Project Management Guidebook for Small Transit Agencies" began in January 2023, when Kansas RTAP had the opportunity to work with Karsh Bhatt, a graduate student in Construction Management. Karsh was seeking a worthwhile master's capstone project that would support

his interest in construction project management. The challenge of developing a guidebook that could fill in the gaps left by federal guidance was the perfect fit for Karsh.

Karsh hit the ground running by reviewing the federal and state requirements for transit facility projects and setting up interviews with rural transit providers that had maintenance facilities. In March of 2023, he conducted interviews and did a literature review. In April, he developed the guide, which he presented as his master's project on May 5th, 2023. In June and July, Kansas RTAP staff finalized the guide. The guide will be published in August of 2023.

Kansas RTAP is so thankful to Karsh Bhatt and wishes him well as he starts his job at Turner Construction! We are also thankful to those who were interviewed for the project:

- Anne Smith, Executive Director, Flint Hills Area Transportation Agency, Manhattan, Kansas;
- Patrick Wallerius, VP/CFO, OCK, Salina, Kansas;
- Kara Reynolds, Magistrate Judge, Coffey County, Kansas (former Director of Coffey County Transportation);



Figure 2: Guidebook author Karsh Bhatt presents his master's degree Capstone Project to his committee. Karsh graduated with a master's in construction management in May of 2023. Photo Credit: Lisa Koch

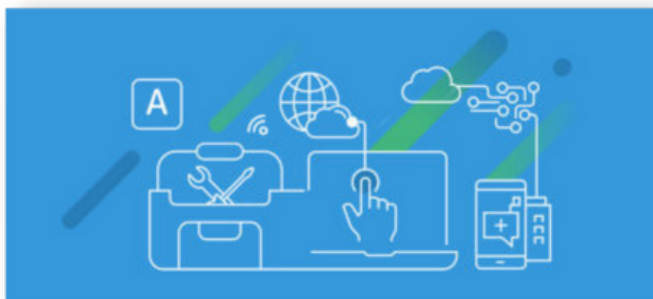
- Sarah Frost, Assistant Vice President, TranSystems, Kansas City, MO; and
- Dr. Brian Lines, Associate Professor at University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas.

RURAL TRANSIT TECHNOLOGIES

By Nikhila Gunday, Kansas RTAP

Many Kansas residents rely on transit agencies that serve rural and small urban regions for mobility. To strengthen the efficiency and reliability of the public transit system in many areas, a commitment to safety and continuous innovation is essential. Simultaneously, increasing demands from discretionary riders need transit operators to deliver high levels of quality service.

Many rural transit agencies use technology to tackle the problems of providing mobility to their communities. The purpose of this article is to provide information and resources on available transit technologies that are easy to understand and use and can help small and rural agencies improve the efficiency and quality of their services.



Technology can mean anything electronic or digital that automates or simplifies processes for gathering,

recording, storing, or transmitting information. The use of technology seeks to minimize duplicated efforts and chances of error. Some applications manage workflows between departments or integrate information from various functions to automate billing processes or other

financial and oversight functions. In transit, there are also special-purpose applications that assist in building schedules, defining routes, and tracking vehicles. Some of these specialized programs integrate functions across the agency. Nearly all aspects of transit agency management and operations can benefit from the use of technology.

Below is an overview of current transit technologies that are in use and current trends in those technologies.

TYPES OF OPERATIONS AND THEIR TECHNOLOGY

Scheduling and Dispatching: Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) is a method of using computers to dispatch transit vehicles. CAD can be used to send and receive messages and/or store data. Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) utilizes computers and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to track and dispatch transit vehicles.

In a CAD/AVL system, scheduling and dispatching software are connected to vehicles via a tablet or mobile data terminal. CAD/AVL systems collect data such as GPS locations, vehicle status, and emergency incidents. With this technology, drivers can receive maps and directions for each segment of their route via their mobile computers. This allows dispatchers to have greater access to information regarding vehicles, thereby increasing the efficiency in how they assign vehicles to routes. CAD can be used to create assignments, track driving behavior, and keep records of crashes. AVL, however, can provide real time GPS updates. This allows in-transit vehicles to be re-routed in real time.

The Benefits of CAD/AVL Systems Include

- Reduction in non-revenue miles due to vehicle optimization,
- Greater coordination with other regional transportation providers,
- Increased security through improved communications and knowledge of driver locations, and
- Increased customer satisfaction due to decreased passenger wait times and improved on-time performance.

For small agencies, the use of “off-the-shelf” tools are considered the most cost-effective and easy to use. Examples include applications in Microsoft Office Suite and Google Workplace. Vehicle scheduling with Microsoft Excel may be sufficient, while Microsoft Access includes capabilities for developing templates that are perfect for creating rider databases. A software professional should be utilized to determine whether Microsoft Office Suite is a capable tool for the agency and to maximize its utilization.

Communication, Information & Marketing: Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital forms of communication have become common for many transit agencies and riders. Virtual mediums and tools such as online meetings (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and GoTo), online surveys, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.), telephone town halls, and public access television have become an increasingly popular way to gather input from riders, provide information, and hold meetings. These virtual tools can be useful in rural areas to provide and gather information where it may be challenging for people across a low-density area to meet and communicate often.

- Communication through social media outlets can be used by fixed-route transit systems to notify the public about service changes, detours, and delayed/canceled trips.
- Short Message Service (SMS) is beneficial to demand-response services for scheduling and communicating with customers as riders do not need a smartphone or an app to receive real-time information.
- Websites are an ongoing means for agencies to share information about their services, routes, hours of operation, fares, and contact information. With the growing demand and accessibility for technology, many existing riders, and potential riders, especially youth and young adults, look for entities to make information available online.
- Online and app-based trip scheduling and reservation tools are an increasingly common practice that many agencies and third-party providers offer. On fixed route services, agencies can publish or share their General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data with third parties to allow riders to plan trips using apps and websites such as agency platforms, Google Maps, and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) Platforms. GTFS data includes schedules, routes, and stop information, as well as real-time information if agencies use AVL.

- Other trip-planning platforms may also include dynamic bus stop signage, real-time information signage, and navigation kiosks; however, these are typically more beneficial for larger fixed-route agencies.

When it comes to digital forms of communication, it is vital to consider accessibility for persons of all abilities as well as those who may not have access to or understand how to use specific technology. For smooth and easy transitions, an agency can use traditional modes of communication integrated with digital media.

“
KDOT is currently promoting ZOOM platform for inter- and cross-communication between various transit agencies and Coordinated Transit District (CTD)s serving in Kansas
 – Rene Hart
 ”

Fare Collection: Credit, debit card and smartphone app payments are becoming more prevalent. Traditionally, closed-loop systems, such as cash or agency-issued fare media like magnetic cards, smart cards, or white-label apps, are used to pay fares. However, in recent years, open-loop payments have allowed passengers to choose their preferred payment method. These systems take fare media, contactless credit and debit cards, third-party apps, and digital wallets like Apple Pay and Google Pay. App-based payments and MaaS platforms, where users can pay for multiple services (transit, bike, and scooter share, TNC, e.g., Lyft and Uber) in the same area, are trends in both types of services.

Business Management: Transit technology not only improves the rider's experience by providing a safe and comfortable trip, but it also benefits the agency as a whole. With the integration of technology, agency employees will be able to organize staffing needs and timekeeping more easily and efficiently. In recent years, most agency employees have had to adapt to new technologies and ways of working. Because of technical advancements, some organizations may be more or less comfortable and skilled with technology. Some agencies lack the appropriate information technology (IT) support to deal with problems as they develop. As a result, comprehensive training is required to ensure that all agencies are adept in critical business administration tools such as email, word processing, data management, videoconferencing, electronic signatures, and VPNs. Increasing access to IT support, integrating staff and CAD platforms, and automatic data collecting and reporting are more opportunities with the adoption of technology.

Maintenance & Asset Management: Adopting technological tools in maintenance and asset management helps transit agencies schedule and track maintenance, document repairs, inventory parts, monitor asset conditions, and create reports. Tools such as laptops and tablets are capable of creating work orders, reference checklists, document repairs, and maintaining inventories. This helps transit agencies report assets and comply with federal, state and agency standards and asset management plans. Data gathered from these tools can help create capital, fleet, and asset management strategies. As agencies embrace electric or alternative-fuel vehicles, electronic and computer components will become more important. Maintaining these vehicles will require new tools and training. Vehicle health monitoring systems can automatically diagnose fleet concerns and alert employees about potential issues before a breakdown.

Safety and Surveillance: Technology-related safety and security may embrace ranging from cybersecurity to onboard and facility security and surveillance systems, advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), driver training simulators, and COVID-19 cleaning technologies. Most current technology requires cybersecurity. With agencies moving to cloud-based technologies and remote

work, additional safety measures may be needed. Rider data collected for ADA eligibility, fare account systems, and trip planning apps used by the agency needs to be safely secured.

Security cameras can assist transit authorities in monitoring transit facilities and vehicles to ensure the safety and security of riders and employees. Cameras, which can be integrated with AVL, can also be used to investigate events and crashes. Wireless cameras and security systems are growing increasingly popular and are simple to install, but they must be charged on a regular basis. When a vehicle returns to the terminal, video from onboard cameras can be automatically downloaded over a Wi-Fi connection. ADAS technologies, which can assist in reducing collisions and increase safety for riders, operators, pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists, are becoming increasingly common in new vehicles. Backup cameras, cruise control, crash and lane departure warnings, and blind spot recognition are examples of ADAS features.

Low- and No- Emission vehicles: More transit agencies across the country are switching to low- and no-emission vehicles. There are different options for an agency to choose between battery electric, hydrogen fuel cell, compressed natural gas (CNG), biodiesel, and hybrid-electric vehicles which have varying refueling time and mileage by fuel type and infrastructure. As low/no emission vehicles grow more widespread, their costs are likely to equalize. Low/no-vehicle federal funding has also increased. The Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) provides huge funding for low/no vehicles, although certain programs require transit agencies to prepare fleet transition plans to compete for discretionary funding.



BENEFITS OF ADOPTING TECHNOLOGY

There are numerous advantages to implementing more integrated transit technology. If an agency does adopt new technology, keep in mind that it may be challenging initially. So, it is necessary for an agency and/or operator to educate and train themselves with the new procedures. When an agency embraces new technology, the transition will be easier to receive the potential benefits. For example, moving to a more integrated and automated system may ultimately allow staff to do things like (Dispatching & Scheduling Training for Rural Transit Systems, 2021):

- Show past trips to the customer and allow the dispatcher to select one of them as a template for a new trip.
- Monitor past travel times to generate more accurate forecast trip times.
- Highlight several trips booked to arrive at or depart from the same address within 30 minutes for a scheduler's review.
- Automatically flag requests from suspended users and block bookings during the suspension period.
- Identify trips that cannot be accommodated in a timely manner so that they can be routed for taxi dispatch or alternative service.
- Set maximum travel times based on trip purpose or funding source.
- Identify and resolve duplicate customer trips and file entries.
- Use of the advantages of integrating dispatch and scheduling to enable real-time, online interactive scheduling that accommodates and communicates cancellations, trip reassignments, and other changes.

CONSIDERATIONS WHILE DETERMINING A TECHNOLOGICAL SOLUTION

Among the various challenges that public transportation organizations face, funding is one of the most important. When funding is limited, it may appear that considering new technology is out of the question. However, technology, including complex routing software, can help systems of any size, even those spread across large

systems of any size, even those spread across large areas. Obtaining the funding that's needed may be easier than expected with a comprehensive proposal and/or strategic relationships with other agencies in the region.

When considering the adoption of new technology, all parts of the organization that would be directly or indirectly affected by the change must be involved on the project team. This team must be involved in all phases of the project. This includes dispatch, operations, management, maintenance, information technology, and governance. Here are some considerations that must be discussed (Dispatching & Scheduling Training for Rural Transit Systems, 2021):

- What hardware might the agency need to run this technology?
- Will the agency need new computers, an additional server, or more cloud storage?
- Is the technology being considered a short-term solution or is it a long-term solution to issues the agency expects to face?
- What is the plan for implementation?
- Is there adequate time and budget for training?
- Can staff be taken off shifts for training?
- Can vehicles be taken out of service to install in-vehicle items?
- Is there budget availability for annual operating costs?

If a transit agency decides it is in their best interest to embrace new technology in their operations, it is necessary to invest enough time and resources into managing the change and training staff to make the effort a success. Because schedulers or dispatchers are primary users, they should be included in the selection process.

CONCLUSION

Technology can help public transportation organizations provide more efficient and effective services while also making trip planning, scheduling, and operation easier for riders and operators. The way agencies use technology and their readiness to implement new technologies differs. Technology advances quickly and



implementing new technology might be difficult. It is critical to understand that not all transportation technology trends apply to rural agencies, which often serve lower-density areas with smaller vehicles. As a result, it is critical that agencies examine and determine their needs, as well as embracing technology that is most appropriate for effectively providing transportation services. Effective communication, marketing, and training are key for ensuring the effectiveness of outward-facing technology and can aid in fostering the growth of rider trust in services and systems (Statewide Technology Plan for Rural Public Transit Agencies 2022, 2022). Seeking technical advice and support from the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), the Kansas Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP), and other industry and community partners can substantially benefit the agencies in implementing the new technologies.

RESOURCES

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KANSAS RTAP TRAINING, TRAINING RESOURCES AND CONFERENCES

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Below are training courses available from Kansas RTAP and other sources through October of this year. If you are interested in hosting a training class, I have started scheduling dates for 2023. Please contact Anne Lowder at alowder@ku.edu if you would like to host a training course at your agency. I have dates available July through October.

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING

2023 KANSAS RTAP TRAINING DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND PASSENGER ASSISTANCE/WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT

https://www.events-kutc.ku.edu/assnfe/CourseView.asp_MODE=VIEW&cICourseID=591

July 26 | Beloit
August 9 | Wichita
August 23 | City of Wilson

September 14 | Ottawa
October 5 | Arkansas City
December 6 | Mayetta

2023 KANSAS RTAP TRAINING DEFENSIVE DRIVING AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

<https://www.events-kutc.ku.edu/assnfe/CourseView.asp?MODE=VIEW&cICourseID=580>

August 8 | Great Bend
September 13 | Parsons

2023 KANSAS RTAP TRAINING APPROVED TRAINERS WORKSHOP

August 15- August 17 | Lawrence

RESOURCES FOR TRANSPORTATION AGENCIES

EasterSeals Project Action Consulting

<https://www.projectaction.com/>

Easterseals Project Action Consulting provides instruction in a variety of formats to meet your community's needs and budgets.

National Center for Applied Technology

<https://n-catt.org/>

Providing small-urban, rural, and tribal transit agencies with practical resources for replicable technological solutions and innovations. The site shares case studies, research, technologies, and provides information on technologies that enable solutions that solve problems and enable goals to be reached.

National RTAP eLearning Transit Resources

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/>

- Training Modules
- eLearning Courses
- Technology Tolls
- Webinars
- Toolkits
- Topic Guides
- Technical Briefs
- Spotlight Articles

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Resources

- Legislative and Federal Policy priorities
- Crime and Human Trafficking Prevention
- Census Issues 2020 Urban Area Determinations
- CT Reader Regular Updates
- Training Calendar

CONFERENCES, WEBINARS, AND CHATS

APTA Expo 2023 - Next Starts Here

Orlando, FL October 8 – 11, 2023

<https://www.aptaexpo.com/apta2023/public/enter.asp>

5th National RTAP Conference - Navigating the Tides of Change with Rural and Tribal Transit

December 3 – 6, 2023 , Myrtle Beach South Carolina

<https://www.nationalrtap.org/News/Conference/2023-Myrtle-Beach>

National Transportation in Indian Country Conference (NTICC) 2023

Anchorage, AK September 24 – September 28, 2023

<https://www.nticc.org/>

Midwest Transit Conference 2023

September 5 -8, 2023 Kansas City, Mo

<https://mopublictransit.org/event/2023-midwest-transit-conference/>

SHARE!

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.



KANSAS TRANSIT REPORTER

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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