Kansas Transit Reporter

FEATURE

Recruiting and Retaining More Transit Drivers

By Nikhila Gunda

This article outlines some strategies to help Kansas transit agencies recruit more transit drivers and retain quality bus drivers, especially during and post COVID scenarios.

Introduction

Within the transportation sector, employment in transit and ground passenger-transportation declined by 24.1 percent between 2019 and 2020. Several factors contribute to this decline in the transit industry and mainly includes an aging workforce and low wages (Bliss, 2018). According to a 2015 joint analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data by the US Department of Transportation, Labor and Education, nearly 200,000 transit and intercity coach driving jobs are

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FEATURE

Responding to an Emergency: Lessons from Flint Hills ATA

By Connor Mountford

It was just another day at the office when Anne Smith, director of the Flint Hills ATA, received a phone call no transit manager wants – one of her buses was on fire. Filled with adrenaline, Anne rushed to the scene of the fire to find that first responders had doused the flames before they fully engulfed the vehicle. Luckily, no one was injured in the incident and Flint Hills ATA is now working with their insurance provider to determine the cause of the fire. At RTAP,

we have heard time and again that what keeps transit managers up at night is the thought of an emergency situation involving one of their vehicles. So, when faced with every transit manager's nightmare scenario, how did Flint Hills ATA respond and what can other managers learn from their experience? The following article tells the story of the Flint Hills ATA bus fire, with information from Anne Smith.

What happened?

One of Flint Hills ATA drivers was on their normal route when they noticed a strange smell coming from their ceiling dashboard. It was like something was overheating. Out of an abundance of caution, the driver pulled over and called dispatch to inform them of the situation. Once parked, however, the smell subsided,

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INSIDE

and the driver continued on their route. Shortly thereafter, the smell returned, but this time it was accompanied by a stream of smoke coming from the ceiling dashboard. Again, the driver immediately pulled over, calling dispatch to inform them of the situation. This time, dispatch called 911 immediately and the driver promptly exited the vehicle. No passengers were on board. Anne was contacted immediately after and rushed to the scene.

While Anne was on her way to the scene, a nearby police officer was able to respond within minutes but was unable to put out the fire. The fire department arrived at the scene shortly thereafter and put out the fire. When Anne arrived, her immediate fears were relieved when she noticed the fire was out and no one was injured. ATA's maintenance staff also arrived on the scene and provided assistance to the Fire Department's fire investigators. But then, the work began.

Anne's team reached out to their insurance provider and contacted a vendor who had recently installed cameras on the vehicle. The bus was towed back to the Flint Hills ATA's maintenance facility, where investigatory units have inspected the vehicle several times to determine the cause of the damage. At this time, no cause had been ascribed to the fire. Currently, the vendor and Flint Hills ATA's attorneys are undergoing a subrogation process – a legal process where an insurer seeks damages from a third party believed to have caused the original claim – which they expect to take some time.

How did the driver respond?

According to Anne, the driver did everything by the book. They had been trained on how to respond to an emergency, so when they noticed a strange smell coming from the ceiling, they contacted dispatch to relay the information. As the situation escalated, the driver remained calm, checking for passengers on the bus prior to evacuating and calling dispatch. While the driver handled the situation with remarkable poise, they emphasized the importance of training and even requested additional training on emergency preparedness and response.

What emergency response procedures did Flint Hills ATA have in place?

In addition to its mandatory safety plans from the FTA and regular trainings from RTAP, the Flint Hills ATA has worked with an insurance consultant for the past five years to improve their risk management procedures. This consultant is helping Flint Hills ATA assess their current policies and procedures to mitigate risk. In general, this includes performing a job hazard analysis, updating the driver policy,
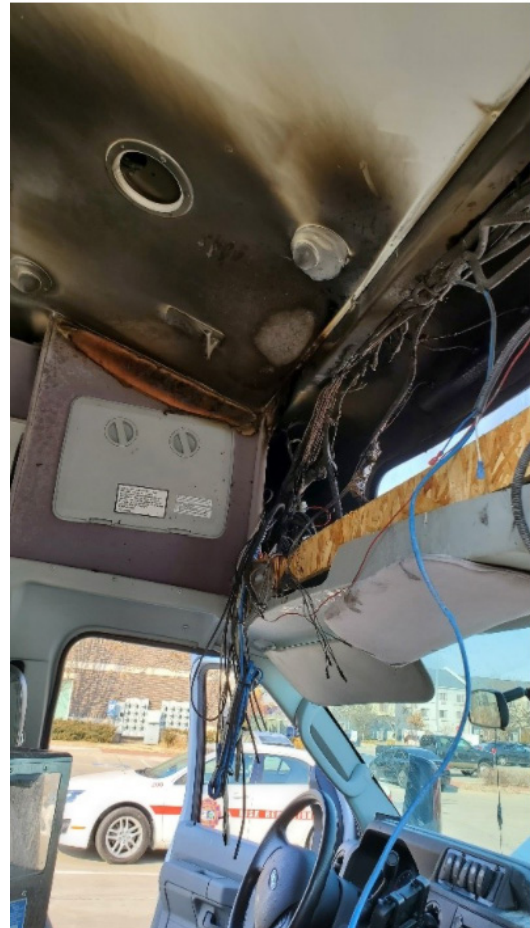
maintenance program, and performing mock DOT audits.

What advice would you give other agencies regarding emergency procedures?

Smith recommended that transit managers evaluate and reflect on your emergency management procedures often. Ask yourself, your drivers, your insurance agency, and your other partners the following questions:

- When was our official policy last updated? Does this reflect our current reality?
- When is the last time you were trained on emergency response procedures?
- Would additional training benefit my employees?
- What are the trade-offs of having additional training?
- How can we better mitigate our risk to passengers, employees, and the agency?

Sources
Smith, Anne, interview by Connor Mountford. 2021. Director, Flint Hills ATA (June 12).

estimated to open by 2022 and nearly 72 percent of the current operator workforce is set to exit by that year, nationwide (Bliss, 2018).

According to BLS, the 2018 median income for bus drivers was $34,450 per year which tends to be much lower than other jobs for young workers, including other types of driving jobs (Bliss, 2018). A study also reported that about 30% of drivers tend to work for a maximum of two years before they opt for new jobs ("Bus Driver Demographics and Statistics in the US", 2021). In the short term, there will be a driver shortage across the transportation industry unless agencies and companies hire and retain more workers. This implies the need of recruiting and retaining more transit drivers by most transit agencies in the US.

Effective strategies to recruit and retain more transit drivers:

• Create an Easy Process:
Having an easy yet creative job hiring process is important for attracting new drivers, especially younger ones. The shorter the application process, the more applicants you might receive, especially though a mobile-friendly recruitment process. Traditional job application processes are time intensive which typically includes filling out a paper application, pre-screening, in-person interviews, and other screenings; this process can be made quicker and easier to access. For example, OCCK transportation agency has used Google Forms to collect

basic information from the applicants, and they contact the applicants back based on the agency's interest (Grinter, 2021).

• Advertise on digital platforms:
The use of Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and other popular digital and social platforms is rapidly growing. In addition to advertising in local newspapers, agencies are highly encouraged to use and advertise about transit job opportunities on these platforms. On most social media, an advertisement can be geofenced (software locates a virtual border around a specified location) in order to target local users. This could potentially help in reaching out to an audience base tenfold with the ability of 'like', 'share', 'retweet' and 'follow' options.

> **Topeka Metro has recently created a video that features three bus operators who share their experiences working at the agency. This video is available on Topeka Metro YouTube Channel.**

• Offer a bonus referral program:
One popular way to find new drivers is by giving referral bonuses; typically given to an existing driver who refers a

job applicant to an openly advertised driver job position. These bonuses commonly include cash, transit memorabilia (t-shirts, mugs, etc.), or discount tickets to shows and other events. Incentive pay can directly influence employees' engagement as well as their commitment to the agency (J. Vance, n.d.).

• Opt for Virtual and/or phone screening (Grinter, 2021):
Due to COVID-19, virtual meetings have been a widely accepted way to communicate. These tools can also be utilized for screening potential bus drivers by phone and/or web before an in-person interview. This method could be an efficient process for both the applicant and agency staff.

• Offer Competitive packages:
One of the key elements for retaining current and hiring new drivers is offering good wages, competitive benefits, signing bonuses and professional development opportunities (Truck Driver Recruiting: Challenges and Opportunities, 2020). With many current bus drivers retiring soon, it is important to recruit and retain a younger work force. Sponsoring their education (for college students, for example) during their time as bus drivers could help the transit agency to attract and retain younger bus drivers.

> **Trell Grinter, Director of OCCK Transportation, shares some insights and experiences on hiring transit drivers and staff during COVID-19. View at KUTC YouTube Channel.**

Emporia, KS

Hotchkiss, CO

- **Use creative marketing tools:**
It is a common practice to advertise about hiring transit drivers using newspapers, billboards and flyers. In addition, agencies are encouraged to utilize and advertise on various platforms where it is most likely for the public to notice. This includes banners on roadsides (with permissions), bus exteriors with visual infographics, and digital media like Facebook and YouTube. For example, Hotchkiss, a rural town in Colorado, has been advertising using banners on a public-school fence along a major roadway.

- **Pay for on-the-job training:**
An agency can have great success in hiring more drivers by covering their training costs. Since driver certification and licenses take up a lot of time with studying and testing, especially drivers for CDL licenses, this can make a significant difference for potential drivers (Mastros, 2020). Most Kansas transit agencies finance driver training through their KDOT grant.

Conclusion

Several studies have reported that recruitment, retention and turnover are among the top concerns of transit managers in the US. In the short term, it is expected that there will be a bus driver shortage in the transit industry with many in the current work force near retirement. But with better advertisement, competitive compensation packages, professional development opportunities and an inclusive approach that is more convenient and easily accessible across all the age groups, Kansas transit agencies can proactively recruit and retain more transit drivers before they get in a serious bind.

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Tips for Mandating Masks on Public Transit Vehicles

By Nikhila Gunda

Wearing face masks, maintaining six feet physical distance, washing hands often, sanitizing public spaces frequently, and avoiding large crowds and poorly ventilated indoor spaces are some of the most important and proven life-saving safety measures recommended by world health officials to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Staying six feet away from others is often difficult on public transportation. Hence, it is important and required to wear a face mask that completely covers mouth and nose, by all people while on public transportation to ensure public safety. The purpose of this article is to list some tips that can help Kansas transit agencies comply with and implement federal mask mandates on all the public transportation vehicles.

Based on the President's Executive Order issued on January 21, 2021, in efforts to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced a federal mask requirement for all public transit systems. The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) soon followed with a security directive implementing the CDC order with an extension on the federal mask mandate until September 13, 2021.

> **On April 30, TSA extended the face mask requirement for all transportation networks, including public transportation, through September 13, 2021.' ("Federal Mask Requirement for Transit | FTA", 2021)**

Best Ways to Mandate Masks on Buses

Mask mandates have been rescinded in most public spaces, so maintaining the mask requirement may be frustrating to passengers. To educate and communicate with the public about this federal mask requirement while traveling on public transportation networks, USDOT has created an initiative 'Mask Up' and related toolkit that includes printable materials, digital assets, talking points, background information and ready to use resources that can support transit agency outreach efforts.

Following are some of the ways gathered from sources like CDC, APTA and FTA that could help agency staff to bring awareness and communicate with riders to comply with the federal mask mandate while traveling on transit buses.

The agency can create their own marketing materials or use the Mask Up toolkit by USDOT or APTA social media graphics and multi-media assets on the federal mask mandate to post on their social media pages at regular intervals.

> **Localize the text of the social media post (tweet or Facebook post) by stating specific action or actions your agency is taking to ensure public safety.**

Hand out flyers to the approaching riders at the bus stops and other travel hubs and shelters with printable posters and decals.

Figure 2

Train management staff, dispatchers and drivers on enforcement methods including how to deescalate upset passengers.

Develop clear policies on what measures drivers are expected to take when enforcing mask mandates (Daley, 2021).

Conclusion

In addition to physical distancing, proper ventilation, vaccination and timely testing, mask-wearing has proven to be one of the life-saving measures that can reduce the transmission of COVID-19. While using public transportation, all the workers and passengers are required to wear mask until September 13, 2021. Agencies are recommended to use printable materials and communication guidance tools by USDOT and APTA like social media graphics, messages, posters, and email content that can help in communicating and creating awareness to the traveling public about the federal mask mandate. Updates on the federal mask requirement for transit are available on the FTA website.

Install and display digital signage on the front face of the buses as shown in figure 2.

For demand response service, dispatchers should remind passengers of the mask mandate when the ride request is made and verified.

Provide or make availability of masks on the buses when the

passenger does not have one.

Hire more staff or volunteers to assist with enforcing mask mandate while on the transportation.

Tips by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA): APTA has developed a program and toolkit that can help agencies to show riders how they are meeting national safety commitments with local actions and how riders can do their part to stay safe. This toolkit is available online on APTA website.

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Tornado Preparedness

By Anne Lowder

Tornado on the Ground – What is Your Plan?

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) tracks severe weather events across the United States. In 2020 the U.S. set a new annual record of 22 severe weather events. NOAA's website states that "2020 is the sixth consecutive year (2015-2020) in which 10 or more-billion-dollar weather and climate disaster events have impacted the United States." To help communities respond to severe weather events the National Weather Service (NWS) developed the program StormReady®. StormReady helps emergency managers develop plans, guidelines and improve their hazardous weather operations. All 105 counties in Kansas have emergency managers (a list of these managers can be found at: https://www.kansastag.gov/KDEM.asp?PageID=200) who can help transit agencies develop severe weather plans.
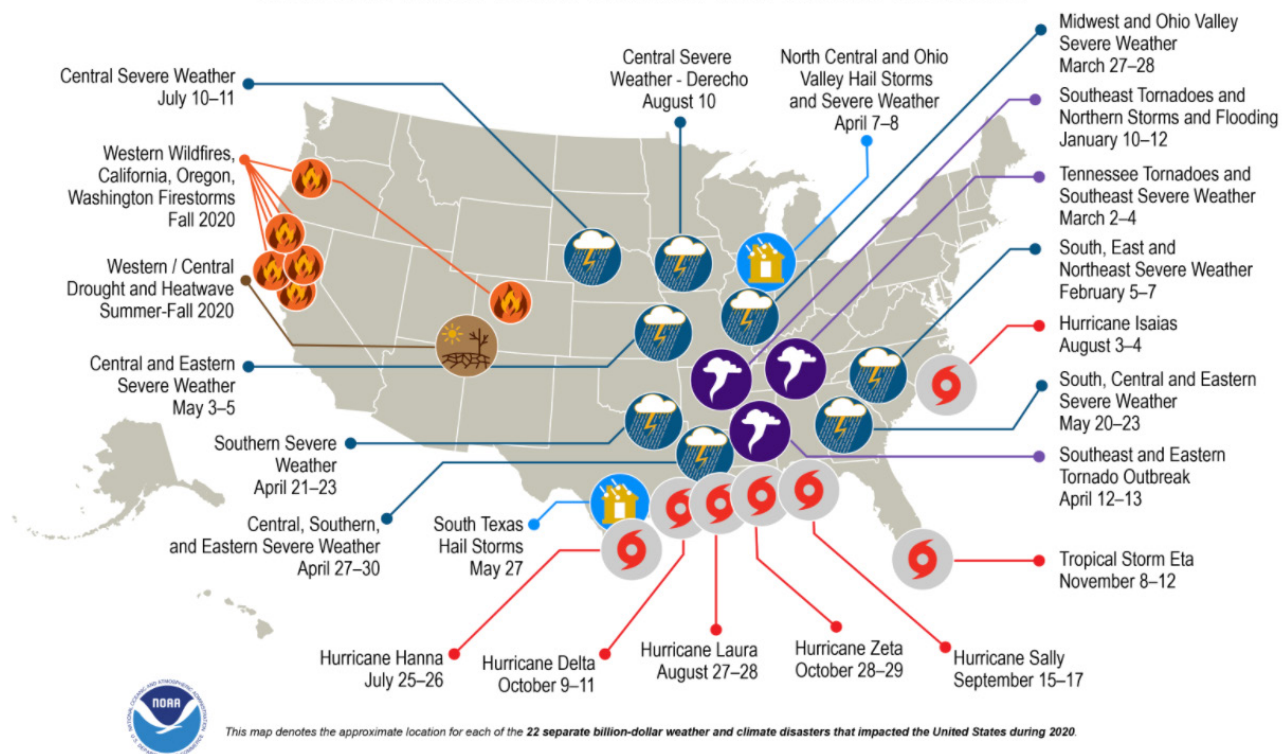
Plan for Severe Weather

Planning for severe weather involves understanding when threats could happen. In Kansas, according to the NWS, most tornadoes occur mid to late April through mid-June, with the peak occurring around May 22nd- 23rd. Planning involves asking questions and then answering those questions by developing policies and procedures that will prepare your agency for an event. Questions such as: If a tornado occurs, what destruction may result? How will it impact my transit agency? What about my employees? Are they considered essential workers? Have my employees made an emergency plan with their family so they can be at work? What if the driver is enroute? -- Does the driver have a list of designated shelters?

It is essential to stay informed. Listen to weather forecasts. News stations in Kansas have apps that can be downloaded to your phone to alert you of severe weather in your area. Your agency may also consider purchasing a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather radio to help you stay informed.

Your plan should have procedures for communicating clearly during emergency situations. All staff should understand agency communication procedures, equipment usage and response options for reacting appropriately. You should have accessible a checklist of procedures for

U.S. 2020 Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters

Central Severe Weather July 10–11

Western Wildfires, California, Oregon, Washington Firestorms Fall 2020

Western / Central Drought and Heatwave Summer-Fall 2020

Central and Eastern Severe Weather May 3–5

Southern Severe Weather April 21–23

Central, Southern, and Eastern Severe Weather April 27–30

South Texas Hail Storms May 27

Hurricane Hanna July 25–26

Hurricane Delta October 9–11

Hurricane Laura August 27–28

Hurricane Zeta October 28–29

Hurricane Sally September 15–17

Central Severe Weather - Derecho August 10

North Central and Ohio Valley Hail Storms and Severe Weather April 7–8

Midwest and Ohio Valley Severe Weather March 27–28

Southeast Tornadoes and Northern Storms and Flooding January 10–12

Tennessee Tornadoes and Southeast Severe Weather March 2–4

South, East and Northeast Severe Weather February 5–7

Hurricane Isaias August 3–4

South, Central and Eastern Severe Weather May 20–23

Southeast and Eastern Tornado Outbreak April 12–13

Tropical Storm Eta November 8–12

This map denotes the approximate location for each of the 22 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters that impacted the United States during 2020.

notification, such as a calling tree for someone to know that they would need to come in. Do you have current emergency contact information? Do you have city, county, and state highway maps available for drivers in case roads are closed? What about if cell phones are disrupted? Do you have locations that your driver could go to find a land line?

Additionally, employees should have a family communication plan established to check in with family members for peace of mind. A useful resource for planning for family communication in an emergency is the website: https://www.ready.gov/plan.

Know the Difference: Tornado Watch vs. Tornado Warning

The NWS defines a tornado as a "violently rotating column of air extending from the base of a thunderstorm down to the ground." Tornadoes occur day or night and can destroy buildings, hurl objects, and uproot trees.

The NWS announces tornados through a tornado watch or a tornado warning. A tornado watch means that a tornado is possible in the watch area and that residents should be prepared to act quickly if a warning is issued.

A tornado warning means a tornado has been sighted or indicated on the weather radar. A warning means take immediate action. Move to an interior room on the lowest floor. If in a vehicle, the NWS recommends moving to the closest substantial shelter to protect yourself and your passengers from flying debris.

If a Tornado is Spotted While Driving

The best course of action if you see a tornado is that your drivers have a list of sturdy shelters in and around your community. Many people think " I'll drive to that big box store and go in there." When a tornado warning is issued, big box stores lock their doors, and staff and customers take shelter in the back of the store. Schools normally have restricted access every day due to security measures and would not be a desirable choice to choose for shelter. It is best to visit shelters in your community and talk about how to be able to utilize the building for your drivers and passengers if a tornado warning is issued.

If driving out of town, the NOAA recommends to not shelter under an overpass. If you are driving and cannot get to a shelter, many people assume it is best to get in the ditch. NOAA states that research is still out on the benefits of sheltering in a ditch because many factors can affect that decision: Getting out of your vehicle is going to increase exposure to flying debris, rain, hail, lightning, and extreme wind. With new developments in automotive design, researchers are evaluating and comparing the minimal

Understanding Severe Thunderstorm Risk Categories

THUNDERSTORMS (no label)	1 - MARGINAL (MRGL)	2 - SLIGHT (SLGT)	3 - ENHANCED (ENH)	4 - MODERATE (MDT)	5 - HIGH (HIGH)
No severe* thunderstorms expected	Isolated severe thunderstorms possible	Scattered severe storms possible	Numerous severe storms possible	Widespread severe storms likely	Widespread severe storms expected
Lightning/flooding threats exist with all thunderstorms	Limited in duration and/or coverage and/or intensity	Short-lived and/or not widespread, isolated intense storms possible	More persistent and/or widespread, a few intense	Long-lived, widespread and intense	Long-lived, very widespread and particularly intense

* NWS defines a severe thunderstorm as measured wind gusts to at least 58 mph, and/or hail to at least one inch in diameter, and/or a tornado. All thunderstorm categories imply lightning and the potential for flooding. Categories are also tied to the probability of a severe weather event within 25 miles of your location.

National Weather Service
www.spc.noaa.gov

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protection of being in a vehicle versus taking cover outdoors.

Whether your policy for your driver and passengers is in or out of the vehicle, your driver and passengers should cover their head and neck with their arms and cover their body with a coat or blanket. If your driver and passengers are staying in the vehicle, keep the seat belt on.

If your driver spots a tornado in the distance, NOAA recommends changing the driving direction and driving away from the path the tornado is traveling. Roger Edwards with Storm Predication Center in Norman, Oklahoma states "There is no safe option when caught in a tornado in a car, just slightly less-dangerous ones. If the tornado is visible, far away, and the traffic is light, you may be able to drive out of its path by moving at right angles to the tornado."
Summary

In sum, plan, plan and then plan again. Contact your emergency managers in your county to help your agency establish a plan for a tornado emergency. Disaster plans are often developed by individual agencies, but one challenge of disasters is that they demand action from agencies and organizations that may not work closely together from day to day. Emergency managers can help your agency develop plans that are coordinated in advance with other businesses in the community to establish responsibilities and to have access to resources. Also, during the preparedness phase, emergency managers may conduct training and exercises to help prepare responders for real events.

Finally, agencies and your drivers should always be weather-aware. Stay informed by using NOAA radios, downloading your local news stations weather app, or looking up the weather on the internet. Develop communication protocols, such as a calling tree. Develop a list of shelters in your community and keep that list in the bus. Also, recommend to your employees that they develop an emergency plan with their families using the resource found at https://www.ready.gov/plan. This allows everyone to be proactive instead of reactive if a tornado warning is issued in your area.

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Navigating the SAM Site to Work for You

By Megan Hazelwood

Navigating the federal SAM Site, or The System for Award Management site, may seem like a daunting and confusing task but, in this article, we're going to break down how to easily navigate the site and how the site can benefit you and your organization.

To begin, the SAM Site is a free, official website of the U.S. Government. Transit agencies typically use it for applying for grants that use federal funding. In addition to applying for federal funding, on the site, you're able to:

- Register to do business with the U.S. Government
- Update, renew, or check the status of your entity registration
- Search for entity registration and exclusion records
- Search for assistance listings (formerly CFDA.gov), wage determinations (formerly WDOL.gov), contract opportunities (formerly FBO.gov), and contract data reports (formerly part of FPDS.gov).
- View and submit BioPreferred and Service Contract Reports
- Access publicly available award data via data extracts and system accounts

According to the SAM site, the term "entity" is used, "to refer to prime contractors, organizations or individuals applying for assistance awards, those receiving loans, sole proprietors, corporations, partnerships, and any U.S. federal government agencies desiring to do business with the government." An entity can also mean, "a party that has been suspended or debarred, is covered by prohibition or restriction, or is otherwise excluded from doing business with the government."

Assistant Bureau Chief for Transportation Planning at the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT), Cory Davis, shared the frequently asked questions that KDOT receives from transit providers regarding the SAM Site including, "why is it required, when do I have to do it, how do I access it, and do I need a notarized signature?" Davis states that transit providers should, "register annually to be eligible for federal funds."

To the right are step-by-step instructions on how to register your entity taken from the SAM Site.

REGISTER IN SAM.GOV AS A NEW ENTITY

NAVIGATE TO SAM.GOV

SELECT THE "SIGN IN" BUTTON IN THE UPPER RIGHT CORNER.

Select "Accept" to accept the US Government System terms.

AFTER SELECTING "ACCEPT," THE SYSTEM WILL DIRECT YOU TO LOGIN.GOV.

Enter your login.gov credentials and select "Sign In." You may be prompted to enter a one-time security code. (You will receive this code via the authentication method you selected during account creation.) Note: If you do not already have a login.gov account, please create an account.

AFTER SIGNING IN, THE SYSTEM WILL REDIRECT YOU TO YOUR SAM.GOV WORKSPACE.

FROM YOUR WORKSPACE SELECT THE "REGISTER ENTITY" BUTTON

SELECT THE "START REGISTRATION" BUTTON AT THE BOTTOM OF THE REGISTRATION OVERVIEW PAGE.

REVIEW THE BEFORE YOU START INFORMATION, AND GATHER THE REQUIRED INFORMATION NEEDED TO COMPLETE YOUR REGISTRATION:

- You will need a Unique Entity identifier (UEI) from Dun and Bradstreet, referred to here as a DUNS number
- Entity Information
  - legal business name
  - physical address
  - entity type
  - general entity information
- Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) and taxpayer name
- Contractor and Government Entity (CAGE) code if you have one,
- NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code if your entity is located outside of the U.S. and its territories
- Financial and banking information to set up Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)
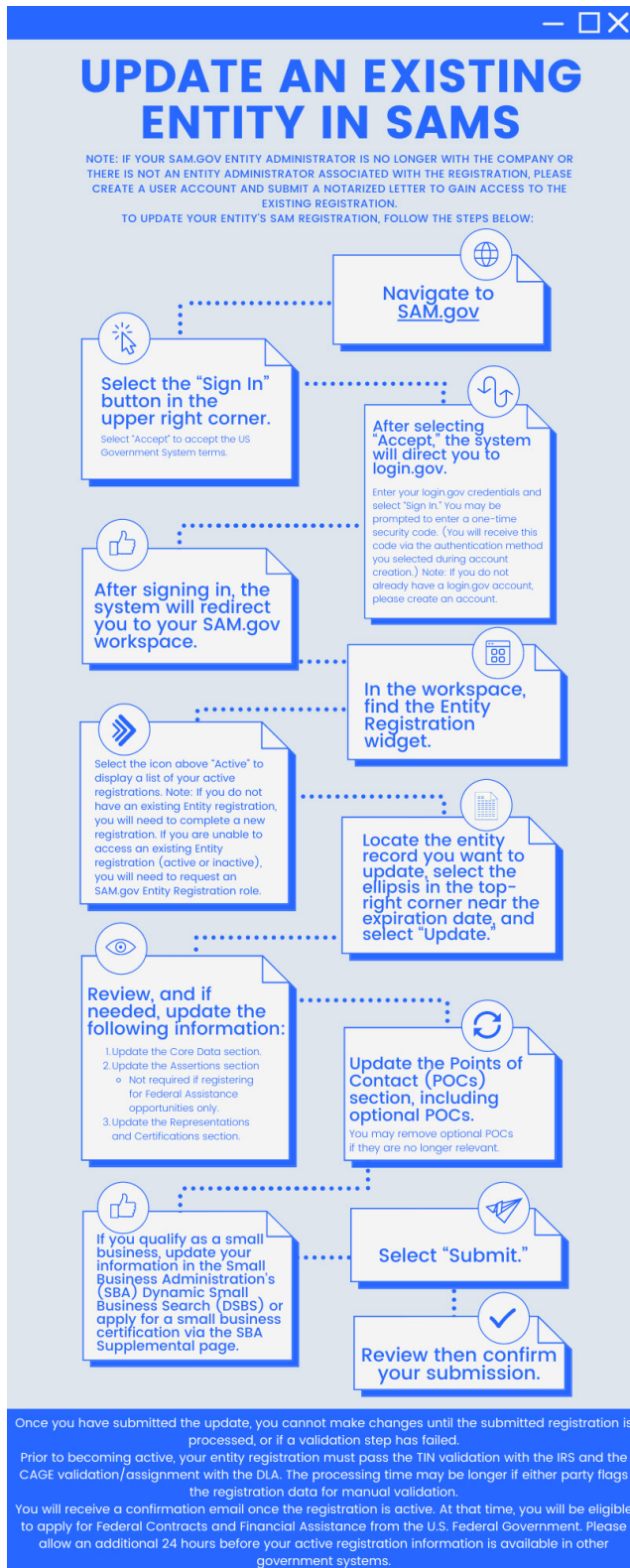
SELECT THE "CONTINUE" BUTTON TO PROCEED.

Complete and submit the online registration. If you have all the necessary information this should take approximately 45 minutes to complete. The time to complete could vary depending on the size and complexity of your registration. Note: For detailed guides on different types of registrations, refer to KB0029897.

Please allow up to 10 business days after submitting your registration for it to become active in SAM. Prior to becoming active, your SAM entity registrations must pass the TIN validation with the IRS and the CAGE validation/assignment with the DLA. The processing time may be longer if either party flags the registration data for manual validation.
If you notice your registration has a status of Submitted for 15 business days or longer, and have not otherwise been contacted by the IRS or DLA to correct or update the necessary information, please contact the Federal Service Desk."

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Below are instructions on how to update an existing entity taken from the SAM Site.

UPDATE AN EXISTING ENTITY IN SAMS

NOTE: IF YOUR SAM.GOV ENTITY ADMINISTRATOR IS NO LONGER WITH THE COMPANY OR THERE IS NOT AN ENTITY ADMINISTRATOR ASSOCIATED WITH THE REGISTRATION, PLEASE CREATE A USER ACCOUNT AND SUBMIT A NOTARIZED LETTER TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE EXISTING REGISTRATION.
TO UPDATE YOUR ENTITY'S SAM REGISTRATION, FOLLOW THE STEPS BELOW:

Navigate to SAM.gov

Select the "Sign In" button in the upper right corner.
Select "Accept" to accept the US Government System terms.

After selecting "Accept," the system will direct you to login.gov.
Enter your login.gov credentials and select "Sign In." You may be prompted to enter a one-time security code. (You will receive this code via the authentication method you selected during account creation.) Note: If you do not already have a login.gov account, please create an account.

After signing in, the system will redirect you to your SAM.gov workspace.

In the workspace, find the Entity Registration widget.

Select the icon above "Active" to display a list of your active registrations. Note: If you do not have an existing Entity registration, you will need to complete a new registration. If you are unable to access an existing Entity registration (active or inactive), you will need to request an SAM.gov Entity Registration role.

Locate the entity record you want to update, select the ellipsis in the top-right corner near the expiration date, and select "Update."

Review, and if needed, update the following information:
1. Update the Core Data section.
2. Update the Assertions section
   o Not required if registering for Federal Assistance opportunities only.
3. Update the Representations and Certifications section.

Update the Points of Contact (POCs) section, including optional POCs.
You may remove optional POCs if they are no longer relevant.

If you qualify as a small business, update your information in the Small Business Administration's (SBA) Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS) or apply for a small business certification via the SBA Supplemental page.

Select "Submit."

Review then confirm your submission.

Once you have submitted the update, you cannot make changes until the submitted registration is processed, or if a validation step has failed.
Prior to becoming active, your entity registration must pass the TIN validation with the IRS and the CAGE validation/assignment with the DLA. The processing time may be longer if either party flags the registration data for manual validation.
You will receive a confirmation email once the registration is active. At that time, you will be eligible to apply for Federal Contracts and Financial Assistance from the U.S. Federal Government. Please allow an additional 24 hours before your active registration information is available in other government systems.

Becoming the new administrator for your entity

Barbara Lilyhorn, Director of Reno County Department of Aging

& Public Transportation, shared the difficulties experienced of an administrator for an entity has been changed by stating, "it's very time consuming to get the 'old' person off and the new person on the entity registration." Below is a step-by-step guide to becoming the new administrator of your entity taken from the SAM Site.

How can I become the new administrator for our entity registration?

SAM.gov requires a notarized letter to give access to new Entity Administrators on existing registrations where there is no existing administrator to approve your role request. Your notarized letter needs to:
• Be on your company/organization letterhead, and be signed by your company President, CEO, or other authorized signature authority
• Contain your company/organization DUNS Number
• Contain the new Entity Administrator's name, phone number, address and email address
• Provide a justification for the change
• Contain this statement above the signature block of your letter and insert the appropriate names where noted:

"The purpose of this notarized letter is to designate [insert name of Entity Administrator] as Entity Administrator for [company]. I, [name and title of signatory], hereby confirm that [insert name of Entity Administrator] is an authorized officer, agent, or representative of [insert entity name, or, for individuals representing themselves, say him/herself]. This letter will authorize [Insert name of Entity Administrator] to have access to the System for Award Management (SAM). SAM is a computer system managed by the Federal Government, and it is only accessible by individuals who are either authorized to represent a particular entity, or by individuals representing themselves. Accessing or using SAM, or information contained therein, for any unauthorized or illegal purposes, may have civil and criminal penalties, and may negatively impact the status of the SAM registration maintained on this entity. I, the below-signed, attest to the accuracy of all information contained in this letter."

Please note that the United States Federal Government does not charge or require any fees in order to be registered into the System for Award Management, nor does it charge any fee to receive assistance from the Federal Service Desk, which is the Help Desk that services SAM.

If the administration of the company's SAM record is to be managed by a 3rd party company include the following:

For the purpose of registering with the United States Government through the online System for Award Management (SAM), I, the below signed, do hereby authorize the following person who is not directly affiliated with the Entity listed above, to act on behalf of the Entity: [insert full name, phone number, address, and email address of the Third-Party Agent] (Designated Third-Party Agent). This authorization permits the Designated Third-Party Agent to conduct all normal, common business functions within SAM while binding the signatory to all actions conducted and representations made as a result of authorization granted herein. I have checked the Third-Party Agent Designation box and completed the above information to indicate that the designated Entity Administrator is a third-party agent.

If the administration of the company's SAM record will not be managed by a 3rd party company include the following:

"For the purpose of registering with the United States Federal Government through the online System for Award Management (SAM), I do not authorize any 3rd party to act on behalf of [company organization, agency]."

NOTE:

Letters omitting either 3rd party authorization or denial will be considered unacceptable.

The following Notarized Letter templates are available to assist with creating your notarized letter:

• Template 1 - Single Entity
• Template 2 - Multiple Domestic Entities
• Template 3 - International Entity (No US Banking Info)

NOTE: If you are outside of the United States, you may contact the United States Embassy Consulate to get your letter notarized.

Below is a step-by-step infographic on submitting notarized letters to the Federal Service Desk taken from the SAM Site.

The SAM website has a useful help page that can be found here. The webpage consists of a "Knowledge Base" with topics such as "Contract Opportunities," "Assistance Listings," and "Contract Data." The site also has the option to search by "Most Popular Help Items' with help topics such as "How do I create, access, and save ad hoc reports," "What standard reports are available," and "How do I search opportunities by NAICS or PSC?" If an answer to your question cannot be found via their search tools, there is a "Create an Incident" and "Live Chat" button that allows you to get personalized assistance.

It is important for transit agencies to know how to navigate the SAM site so that they're able to ensure that they're in good standing and able to apply for grant funding. We hope that this article helps you to better navigate the SAM site so that you're able to easily register as a new entity, update an existing entity, and add yourself as the new administrator of an entity; all of which should make applying for grant funding a smoother process. Should difficulties arrive while navigating the site, utilize the help page for live chat assistance or to create an incident for assistance.

Submitting Notarized Letter to Federal Service Desk

The letter must be notarized, scanned, and submitted to the Federal Service Desk (FSD.gov). Follow the steps below to submit the scanned notarized letter to the FSD:

NOTE: The new Entity Administrator must have an individual SAM User Account created with the e-mail address provided in the notarized letter in order for the FSD to process your request.

1. Log in to FSD.gov
2. Click "Create an Incident"

3. Select System for Award Management (SAM) in the "System Name" field.

4. Select SAM: Notarized Letter in the "Issue Type" field.

5. Fill out all remaining fields.
6. Select the "Paperclip" icon to add attachments and attach your scanned notarized letter.

7. Once you have filled out all required information and attached your notarized letter, click "Submit".

Sources

- The System for Award Management (SAM). (n.d.). Home. SAM.gov | Home. https://sam.gov/content/home.
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- Lilyhorn, B. (2021). Director of Reno County Department of Aging & Public Transportation (M. Hazelwood, Interviewer)
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Best Practices for File Management and Record Retention
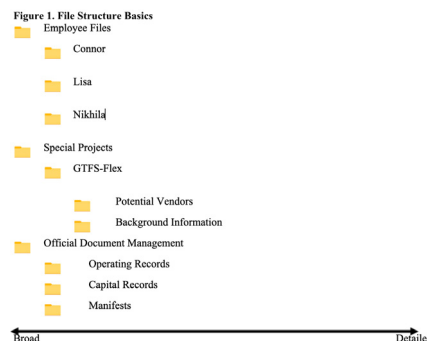
By Connor Mountford, Kansas RTAP

We have all been there. You are working on a project and need to reference a document from one of your colleagues. So, you navigate to their folder on your shared drive only to notice the hundreds of floating Word documents, PDFs, and Excel files. Scrolling through the files you see the document you need but cannot decide whether to open the document labeled as "Final" or "FinalFinal". After several emails and a phone call you finally have the right document and can get on with your work. While this is an annoying and creates inefficient workflow, it does not fundamentally affect the organization's effectiveness. Imagine, however, that the project you're working on is your triennial review and the document you can't find is the Employee Affirmation of the Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy.

File management and record retention are not exciting topics. However, as you know, a significant amount of documentation is necessary. A good file management and record retention policy can save everyone within your organization a lot of headaches. This article will provide you with some practical tips on file management and record retention, including file structures, file naming, and file back-up. An example of each concept is provided, and we encourage you to take the concept and adapt it to meet your agency's needs. Finally, a question and answer section and an additional resources section are provided.

File Structures

Your organization's file structure is the arrangement of files that allow you to navigate within File Explorer on your computer. This will look different for each organization, but it is important that it is uniform across the organization to avoid confusion when finding the right folder for an upload or download. In general, it is a best practice to organize your files hierarchically so that people are not overwhelmed by the number of files they have to search through (Princeton University Library). Each subsequent folder should be more detailed. See figure 1 for an example.

Figure 1. File Structure Basics

Employee Files
    Connor
    Lisa
    Nikhila
Special Projects
    GTFS-Flex
        Potential Vendors
        Background Information
Official Document Management
    Operating Records
    Capital Records
    Manifests

Broad ——————————————→ Detailed

Naming Files and Documents

While you are thinking about your file structure, pay careful attention to how you are naming your files and documents. If a new employee can open File Explorer and navigate you file structure and find a document intuitively, then your file naming and structure have been successful. When creating your file management and record retention policy, you should keep the following general principles in mind:

General Best Practices

- File naming should be consistent
- File names should be short (<30 characters)
- Avoid spaces and special characters (e.g. &, *, ^, %, $, #, @)
- Use capitalization and underscores instead of spaces and special characters
- Document your file naming standard in your policy and train employees on file management
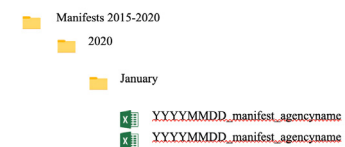- Considerations When Naming Files
- Date
- Type of work

- Project name
- Naming conventions of the FTA and KDOT
- Version number
- Official/ unofficial document

Backing Up Your Files

The University of Pennsylvania Libraries recommend the 3-2-1 rule for backing up your files (University of Pennsylvania Libraries). This method works in the following manner:

- 3 copies of your data: If a document is erased or lost by an employee, this

Figure 2. Example of File Uniform File Naming – Vehicle Inspection

Manifests 2015-2020
    2020
        January
            YYYYMMDD_manifest_agencyname
            YYYYMMDD_manifest_agencyname

ensures that the document exists somewhere within the organization.
- 2 types of storage media: Backing up all documents on a cloud server or external hard drive provides protection for your files in the case of a hack or crash.
- 1 copy should be offsite: At least one copy of your files should be kept off-site in case of a fire, theft, or flood. Using a cloud server is the easiest way to accomplish this.

Q&A with Transit Managers

What records do you keep?

Diane Yunghans: All expense invoices, driver's reports, income receipts, monthly bank statements, monthly Black Cat KDOT reports, drug and alcohol screening, and all driver training.

Kandace Bonnesen: Maintenance records, daily vehicle routes, denial records, scheduling requests, fare/ride card purchases and receipts, pre and post vehicle inspection forms, agency expenditure monthly reporting

and agency contracts, warning and suspension letters, no-show records, disposed vehicle information, Title VI complaints, any drug and alcohol required documents/employee files, training certifications, and deposits slips.

Barbara Lilyhorn:

- Personnel Files
- DMV yearly record
- All records required by KDOT (that are subject to site review and audit) We also keep support documents for reference:
- Grant applications
- Title VI
- Triennial Review
- Budget

What is your process for filing records? Do you keep hard copies or electronic copies?

Diane Yunghans: We store all our reports mostly within Microsoft Office 360 but do print off each month and save for 5 years.

Kandace Bonnesen: Yes, both hard and electronic copies. We will be phasing most items to electronic in the near future.

Barbara Lilyhorn: Files are kept by Category Topic by year and rotated out and destroyed when they reach their "expiration" date usually every 5.7, or 10 years depending on the record's requirement

Files are clearly marked and filing done on a timely manner – often daily

Do you have a record keeping policy?

Diane Yunghans: Per KDOT regulations we keep them for 5 years

Kandace Bonnesen: Not applicable.

Barbara Lilyhorn: Yes. See Appendix A.

Who has access to upload/ process records?

Diane Yunghans: Office administration has access to all uploaded files but the drivers only have access to their driver files.

Kandace Bonnesen: Department Office

Administrator, Fiscal Office Specialist and Transit Manager.

Barbara Lilyhorn: The Director and Assistant Director would process records, however the Administrative Associate, Safety Maintenance Coordinator and Transportation Coordinator can view records and may add documents

What is your file structure for electronic records? Is this uniform across the organization?

Diane Yunghans: We have most files organized by month then we also segregate them by either general office files or drivers' files.

Kandace Bonnesen: Not applicable.

Barbara Lilyhorn: Yes –we all share the same drive and have access to the same files

Would a uniform filing system make your job easier? Why or why not?

Diane Yunghans: We like the system we use now that is stored online. We would like to a more electronic system and not print off each month.

Kandace Bonnesen: Yes. Most of Aging's programs are grant funded and as such, there are requirements per grant of record retention. On average most are five years with exception to federal grants that may require retention for specific items for as long as the program exists, such as disposal of vehicles, housing items, etc.

Barbara Lilyhorn: A Uniform filing system would be useful for job succession or in case of a position vacancy or short absence, and for all who have access to the records to be able to easily and quickly find documents – it expedites working on jointly shared projects. It assures that all records necessary for KDOT reporting are identified and all subgrantees are aware of what they need to keep and or track.

Additional Resources

The following resources take a deeper dive into the best practices surrounding file management and record retention, including file naming, file structures, and

choosing document types:

- [Stanford Library](#)
- [University of Pennsylvania Library](#)
- [Princeton Library](#)
- [Brown Library](#)

Sources

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- Princeton University Library. n.d. Research Data Management at Princeton. https://libguides.princeton.edu/c.php?g=102546&p=930626#s-lg-box-2783109.
- University of Pennsylvania Libraries. n.d. Data Management Recommended Practices: Storage & Backups. https://guides.library.upenn.edu/datamgmt/storage.
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New Learning Management System Now Live

By Emily Wilder

On June 17th KUTC hosted a webinar to introduce the new learning management system (LMS) and walk users through the system's key functions. If you missed the webinar, you're in luck! The webinar was recorded and is available to view here.

The webinar covers:

- Limitations of the old system
- Upgrades in the new LMS
- How to view courses
- Search & filtering options
- How to create an account

- How to create an account for others
- How to register multiple people for multiple classes
- How to view enrollments

The LMS is now live and registration for all KS RTAP Fall 2021 classes is open. Although the LMS is live and operable, there is still room for improvement and final adjustments. I encourage you to watch the webinar, test the new system and send all comments, questions, or ideas for improvement to Emily Wilder at ewilder@ku.edu or to KUTC training at kutc_training@ku.edu. We are excited about the new LMS and want to make sure it is tailored to meet your training needs!

KS RTAP (Rural Transit Assistance Program) Training Update System Now Live

By Anne Lowder

KS RTAP appreciates your flexibility in adjusting to online and single agency training during the height of the pandemic. Because more people are becoming vaccinated, we are able to do in person trainings again! As such, we will be eliminating the online driver's training. Having the ability to train in person with drivers is essential to safe transit operations. Scheduled trainings will begin in July.

In addition, we are excited to launch our Learning Management System (LMS). This is a place where agencies can schedule and pay for RTAP trainings, including by the Approved Trainers. We will also be instituting a new policy that requires payment in full prior to the training, including payments by check. If you have questions about the LMS, please contact Megan Hazelwood mhazelwood@ku.edu

2021 KS RTAP Training Schedule
All classes below taught by Anne Lowder, KS RTAP Lead Trainer

Date of Training	Training Program	City
7/14/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Dodge City KS
7/15/2021	Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance	Derby, KS
7/21/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Smith Center KS
7/22/2021	Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance	Wellington KS
7/28/2021	Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance	Topeka, KS
7/29/2021	Open	

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8/4/2020	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Phillipsburg KS
8/5/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Newton KS
8/18/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Colby KS
8/19/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Derby, KS
8/25/2021	Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance	Paola KS
8/26/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Lawrence Ks
9/21/2021	Approved Trainer Workshop	Heartsprings, Wichita KS
9/22/2021	Approved Trainer Workshop	Heartsprings Wichita KS
9/28/2021		Ottawa KS
10/6/2021	Open	
10/7/2021	Open	
10/13/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Ottawa KS
10/14/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Bonner Springs
10/20/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Howard KS
10/21/2021	Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance	Emporia KS
10/26/2021	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Leavenworth KS

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KS RTAP Approved Trainers (ATs) Are Training, Too

In addition to the above classes, ATs (Approved Trainers) are also training in person again. You will find their scheduled classes on our Learning Management System (LMS).

Helpful Resources

Vaccine Information

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, developed the guide: "How to Build Transit Workers' Confidence in COVID-19 Vaccines." The guide provides six steps to building vaccine confidence among personnel, a vaccine communication and confidence checklist, and a vaccine confidence conversation starter for transit agencies. https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-programs/safety/how-build-transit-workers-confidence-covid-19-vaccines

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) 2021 Communications Calendar

file:///C:/Users/alowd/Downloads/14791_2021CommCalendar_061720_v8-tag.pdf

This is NHTSA's one-stop-shop for the latest highway traffic safety communications news, campaign materials, and marketing techniques. Some examples from the calendar:

July	Vehicle Theft Prevention Month
July 4	Impaired Driving
August 18	Impaired Driving National Enforcement
September 6 – 27	Rail Grade Crossing Campaign
September 19-25	Child Passenger Safety Week
September 25	National Seat Check Saturday

Transit Conferences

2021 National Rural ITS Conference
July 20-22, 2021
Virtual

http://www.nationalruralitsconference.org/

The National Rural ITS Conference focuses on Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) implementation in local communities and provides an opportunity to hear new and thoughtful perspectives on a wide variety of ITS topics. ITS improves transportation safety and mobility and enhances productivity by integrating advanced communication technologies into vehicles and infrastructure.

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging 46th Annual Conference and Tradeshow
July 19-22,2021
Virtual

https://www.n4aconference.org/#Home-About-the-Conference

The 2021 n4a Conference and Tradeshow will be held virtually and will continue to provide peer-to-peer learning, insight into federal policy and national trends that affect local communities, and tremendous opportunities for learning.

Midwest Transit Conference
September 7 –9, 2021
St. Louis, MO

https://web.cvent.com/event/fd468bc4-c964-47a6-b96c-c853cd972476/summary

The 2021 Conference will provide several opportunities to meet with other transit professionals, stakeholders, elected and interested citizens across the Midwest. Three state public transit associations are hosting this event: Iowa Public Transit Association, Kansas Public Transit Association, and Missouri Public Transit Association. Hosted at the Marriott St. Louis Grand Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri, this tri-state event brings forth a unique opportunity to share innovative ideas and best practices with a variety of top presentations, workshops and panel discussions. This year, they are offering a virtual one-day admission for attendees to participate in a hybrid experience.

Community Transportation Association of America Small Urban Network 2021 Conference
August 11 –13, 2021
Missoula, MT

https://ctaa.org/sun-2021/

CTAA's annual Small Urban Network (SUN) Conference, now heading into its seventh year, allows chief executives and leaders at small-urban transit agencies a chance to gather with their peers to network, share ideas and solutions and shape CTAA policy strategy impacting small urban systems in a collegial, retreat-like setting.

CTAA 2021 Expo
November 7 –11, 2021
Richmond, VA
https://ctaa.org/expo-2021-home/

CTAA's EXPO is the premier annual training and networking event for community and public transportation professionals. Participants take part in learning and networking events. Sessions help keep attendees up to date with innovative technology, workforce development, communication strategies, funding, and regulations. The EXPO also features a trade show with the latest community transportation goods and services.

RTAP Director's Message

By Lisa Koch

I hope you are all having a lovely summer. We at Kansas RTAP have been preparing to resume in person driver trainings and add new trainings, such as the Kansas Transit Manager's Training and several soft skill trainings. We have also implemented a new learning management system for you to sign up for courses and review course records. You can find all of this at: https://www.events-kutc.ku.edu/kutc/RTAP.asp. I hope you get a lot out of our expanded training offerings and please email me if you have ideas for other trainings or information we can provide. You can reach me at kolisach@ku.edu.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the newsletter and that you have a fantastic rest of your summer.

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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