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INSIDE THE ISSUE

TIPS FOR OFFERING ADVERTISING AT SMALL AGENCIES

By Lisa Harris-Frydman, Kansas RTAP

Transit agencies that offer advertising can generate revenue to help with expenses and generate local match. Sponsors can benefit from having their logo or message seen by your customers and stakeholders. Not all potential sponsors are a good fit, though, and it helps to have some guidelines to make the process go smoothly. The purpose of this article, written for managers of transportation departments, is to highlight the use of advertising at a small agency, and explore how and when to use such advertising, including any rules pertinent to Kansas.

Figure 1: LMH Health 4"x7" sticker advertisement

Advantages of Advertising

Extra revenue from advertising can cover expenses not eligible for reimbursement. It can also contribute to your local match. In addition to direct financial benefits, when you provide the opportunity for advertising, you can create and deepen partnerships with your advertisers.

Who is advertising on their small-agency vehicles

We were unable to obtain examples of the use of advertising on transit vans or cars in Kansas, with one exception. The Senior Resource Center (SRC) in Lawrence, KS, advertises its key business partner, the local hospital (LMH Health), on a 4” x 7” sticker inside their vans and cars. Read more about that below. We did find that some of the larger transit buses in the state have wraps that contain advertising. For example, Wichita Transit has the logo for Proterra on the side of their electric buses. Proterra is a partner in Wichita Transit’s electric bus program.

National RTAP has a helpful article titled *Bus Wraps and n-Kind Advertising,* see link below, with lessons learned re: paratransit vehicles that can be applied to smaller vehicles.

Rules for using advertising on vehicles purchased with KDOT funds

Federal rules for advertising on vehicles funded by KDOT are contained in the Kansas Department of Transportation’s *Policy Manual*. There may also be local code governing advertising in your city or county, so check those sources.

KDOT’s manual says:

*“**Ads on program vehicles**. Advertising on the outside of all transit vehicles is allowed by KDOT as an additional way to generate program funds. In general, advertisements on the outside of transit vehicles shall conform to commercial speech standards and not conflict with any state or federal law. Advertising must not contain fraudulent, deceptive, or offensive material and must clearly identify the advertiser. All proposed advertising must be approved by the agency’s executive officer or the organization’s president and KDOT. Advertising may not alter the appearance of required labeling. The arrangements, costs, expectations and specifications for the advertising will be established within a signed contract between the transit provider and the advertiser before the advertisement can be applied to a KDOT vehicle. A policy on exterior vehicle advertising should be included in the provider agency transit services policies. The arrangements, costs, expectations and specifications for the advertising will be established within a signed contract between the transit provider and the advertiser before the advertisement can be applied to a KDOT vehicle.”*

Record-keeping Required

KDOT's Policy Manual goes on to say: "A separate accounting report is required to be maintained by the provider agency to verify the income generated by the advertising on the vehicle."

Tips for finding sponsors for advertising

Megan Poindexter, Executive Director of the Senior Resource Center (SRC) of Lawrence, Kansas, has some advice for agencies seeking advertisers. "Be thoughtful about this," she said. She explained that if you cast a wide net for advertisers, you could generate interest from organizations that don't fit with your agency's mission or reputation. For example, the National Academies of Science report titled Developing and Implementing a Transit Advertising Policy states that some potential advertisers wanted to run ads addressing hot-button political issues or run advertisements for candidates for office, both of which could compromise the transportation agency.

Poindexter, who has a Masters in Nonprofit Management and certification in fundraising, previously worked in development in the entertainment industry. She draws on lessons she learned there when building advertising revenue for the SRC. She recommends approaching carefully selected potential advertisers as partners in a shared mission rather than as simply transactional sponsors. "It deepens the conversation," she said.

Poindexter recommends initiating conversations about advertising with a just few organizations that already support your mission or that could become a partner to support your mission. She suggests not using the "back of a 5K T-shirt strategy" of advertising the logos of scores of supporters. Instead she suggested advertising just a few partners who could work with you in other ways. That way their organizations will not have to compete so much for visibility.

When you initiate conversations about partnerships, you get to say who gets to put their name next to yours. It helps to have shared skin in the game, said Poindexter. "Emphasize the mutual goal of supporting seniors in the community."

Another selling point of a partnership is employee satisfaction for the partner. She said research has shown that employers who support worthy causes have more loyal employees.

Figure 2: LMH Health Sponsored Ad Space

Example of a partnership

The SRC's main business partner is LMH Health, which is the community hospital. The SRC and LMH Health have developed a partnership around the common goal of increasing awareness of the social determinants of health. LMH has internal strategic plan on community health beyond hospitalization. Access to transportation to medical appointments and social activities is a key determinant of health, and Poindexter said LMH Health recognizes the SRC's role in providing these services to seniors. The SRC is especially helpful to the hospital in providing rides that are not covered by Medicare to the hospital and its many affiliated physician offices.

Poindexter said that thinking about health in broader picture really opened up conversation about a partnership. "The majority of our rides are for medical appointments. We provide reliable, consistent transportation for follow up and preventative appointments. But also, any other time we provide transportation we contribute to health – mental, emotional and physical. This could be for a haircut, a social event, or something else that connects that rider to others. Especially with COVID, we know so much more how isolation affects health," she said.

LMH health pays for logo placement and messaging at

dollars and marketing dollars. Poindexter said larger organizations typically have healthy marketing budgets, and if you can give them examples of how you can provide logo placement for them with a fair market value, they have a better chance of getting approval to use those funds.

The SRC provides LMH Health's logo in several places, including in their lobby, in their vehicles and in their newsletter. The partnership has grown to include shared sponsorship in activities, such as a presentation for senior groups by a local physician who specializes in brain health.

Figure 3: LMH Health Lobby Banner

What an advertising agreement looks like

A simple advertising agreement can be found in this example from Fairmont-Marion County Transit Authority, WV.

There is no set guidance out there for determining the cost or the duration of the agreement. Poindexter suggests developing a basis for the cost that makes sense, like the number of people viewing the advertising in a given day. She said repeat views are worth more than initial views, since they reinforce the message. She suggested that you create a methodology for determining value of the advertising that the partner can agree to, and then pitch a reasonable cost per view, and a time frame.

Timeframes in advertising agreements are important. "You have to be very clear about that timeline, and be prepared to pull logos off if they don't hit it/ commit --and send the money!," Poindexter said. "Unfortunately, that does happen on rare occasions. If a timeline isn't set, you may make a big 'advertising' commitment to a business partner who then never gives your agency additional support, while you're still stuck with their logo all over your stuff years later," she said.

An example of an advertising agreement with a timeline is an annual sponsorship that allows your agency to receive repeated dollars each year.

Poindexter recommends that when you set your timeline, take into consideration the business' budget cycle—ask them when you should prepare the next year's proposal and put it on your calendar! Start early—it always takes them longer to get through their process than expected. For instance, if you set a calendar-year sponsorship to start every January, and your contact at the business tells you they finish their budget cycle in October, then start talking with them about the coming year's sponsorship in August.

Advertising on or in a vehicle might be part of a larger agreement like the SRC's agreement with LMH Health, increasing the number of views of your partner's logo, and the overall value of the advertising to them. That's especially true if the views are from an audience they want to target.

What to seek and what to avoid

Poindexter recently polled fellow members of a non-profit discussion group about possible language for a policy on advertising that would speak to what would benefit an agency and what they would want to avoid. In response, several members of the group shared similar language for a policy on receiving gifts that could be adapted when seeking advertising:

It is the mission of ABC Nonprofit to _____. Toward this, ABC Nonprofit will not accept charitable gifts that conflict with this mission. The types of gifts not accepted include, but are not limited to: _____. All initial gift decisions are made by the Executive Director of ABC Nonprofit with the board of directors having the final say.

Another member of the discussion group says she uses the concept of "reputational risk" when discussing if a business would be an appropriate sponsor/ donor to align with. Think about which types of advertising would risk your agency's reputation and have your policy address what you don't want as well as what you want.

Where to purchase wraps and stickers

A quick internet search turned up two possible vendors for advertising materials in Kansas: FastSigns of Lawrence and SignsNow of Wichita. You might Google "car wrap shops near me" or decal shops to find a vendor near you. Costs are minimal for stickers. Poindexter said she had been quoted $100 per window for signage in a vehicle.

Tips for design

If your advertiser has a marketing department, they will likely prefer to design their own decal or sign, subject to your approval. If they do not, and if you do not have design expertise in-house, your sign company might be able to provide design services, for a fee.

Tips for successful installation and removal of advertising on vehicles

You have a few options for how to place an advertisement on or in a vehicle. If you are unsure about the durability or removability of a wrap or decal, ask the vendor for references – and contact the reference to learn about the product from a customer perspective.

A National RTAP article titled Bus Wraps and In-Kind Advertising mentions that some agencies have had difficulty removing decals without damaging their vehicles. Make sure small decals can be removed easily with an adhesive remover or make damage-free removal costs part of the agreement with your advertiser. If you are installing a wrap, make installation and removal costs part of the agreement.

Another idea is to install a frame on the back of a van for advertising rather than applying it directly to the vehicle. Yet another alternative, a magnetic sign, can be easily added and removed. (Although maybe too easily…the SRC tried magnetic signs on their vans and they kept falling off.)

Conclusion

When you advertise partner organizations that fit with your agency's mission and enhance your reputation, it is good business, and has benefits beyond dollar and cents. Take the time to write a good advertising policy and agreement template to avoid inviting content that might not fit your agency or community.

When pitching an advertising agreement, Poindexter suggests: "Leave the door open to follow up! 'If I don't hear back from you before next Friday, I'll check in to see what questions you have,' is one of my favorite turns of phrase. Additionally, you can ask which fiscal year they want to pay their sponsorship—and if they want to break it into more than one payment. BUT, if you break it into more than one payment, it's on you to send invoices/ reminders."

With a little homework, preparation, and relationship-building, your agency can generate more revenue and provide better visibility for agencies that share your customer base and fit with your mission. Win-win!

RESOURCES

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Interview on July 11, 2022 with Megan Poindexter, Executive Director, Douglas County Senior Resource Center.

Email communication on June 1 and June 14, 2022, with Rene Hart, Public Transportation Manager, Kansas Department of Transportation.

STAYING IN COMPLIANCE: KDOT DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAM

By Kara Cox, Kansas RTAP

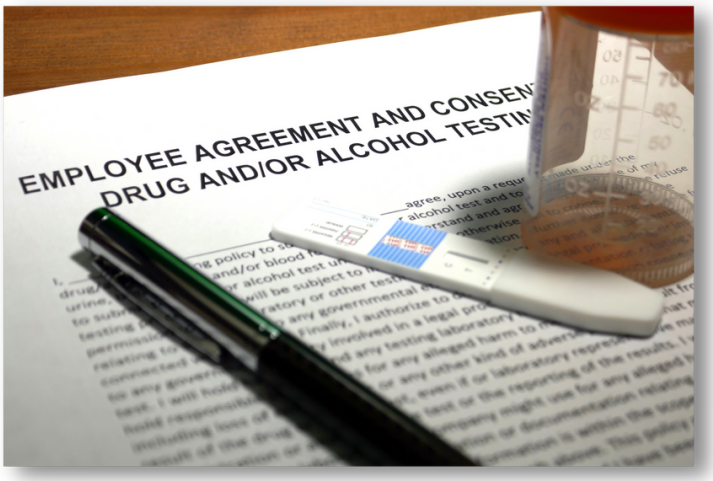
Does your agency follow all the requirements of having a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) compliant drug and alcohol testing program? As a transit manager, it can be overwhelming to ensure you are meeting all the requirements when it comes to drug and alcohol testing. This article will take a closer look at Kansas requirements and the process of making sure your employees are compliant.

WHO MUST FOLLOW THE FTA DRUG AND ALCOHOL REGULATIONS?

According to National RTAP, "any recipients or subrecipients of Sections 5307, 5309, or 5311 federal funding must test all safety-sensitive employees regardless of the size of the system or the number of employees." For reference of the FTA drug and alcohol regulations, see 49 CFR Part 655.

The Kansas Department of Transportation manages the Rural Public Transit Program each year that provides 5311 federal funding. This program offers grants for new and established transit agencies. Under this funding, agencies are required to follow the FTA drug and alcohol regulations. This may seem overwhelming for some agencies, but KDOT has partnered with a company called ComplianceOne to make the process far less intimidating. ComplianceOne specifically works with companies to provide cost-effective compliance solutions that promote safe, drug-free workplaces.

COMPLIANCEONE
SERVICE, VALUE, EXPERTISE



HOW DOES AN AGENCY WORK WITH COMPLIANCEONE?

After KDOT has accepted a new agency, KDOT will notify ComplianceOne of the new addition. ComplianceOne will then reach out to the agency to obtain their information and answer any questions the agency may have. Once ComplianceOne has all the information, they will set the agency up in their computer system and laboratory. Testing supplies will be sent to the agency and a Medical Review Officer will be assigned. In addition to the testing supplies, agencies will receive a program notebook that contains the following:

- ComplianceOne Employee Directory
- Helpful information about their program
- Medical Review Officer information
- Instructions for the Supervisor and Employee training
- Drug and Alcohol Policy, Employee Assistance Program Policy
- New Employee Checklist, Maintenance Forms (roster update report form, collection information form, new contact information form Verification and Release forms, Mandatory Referral forms and checklists)
- Substance Abuse Provider information
- 49CFR Part 40 regulations
- 49 CFR Part 655 regulations
- Copies of ComplianceOne newsletters

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS WHEN IT COMES TO TESTING

How long does it take to get drug test results?

"Results from workplace drug testing are fairly quick and can usually be received in a few days. Negative results are usually received within 24 hours; however, a non-negative screen will require further testing that may take up to ten working days after the Medical Review Office receives the result from the lab.
If the initial screen is negative, the Medical Review Office (MRO) will securely email the employer the result. If a positive result occurs, the MRO will contact the donor and will inquire about any medications currently in use. The donor will have to provide proof of a valid prescription and prescriber information for prescription medications."

Is oral fluid testing available for DOT employees?

"Currently oral fluid testing is not allowed for DOT employees. However, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) announced new proposed oral fluid testing guidelines on Monday, February 28, 2022. Comments on the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) were submitted March 30, 2022. Oral fluid testing is currently still prohibited in DOT regulated situations. Following the review of comments, DOT will issue final guidelines, which will include an implementation period after which oral fluid testing will be permitted in DOT situations."

HOW DOES RANDOM DRUG TESTING WORK?

Each agency is responsible for keeping their employee roster current. At the beginning of every month random selections are pulled from KDOT agencies using a a random number generator. A Certification Letter and Donor List is securely mailed to the Designated Employee Representative (DER) for each agency. These selections are made to ensure that the required FTA minimum of 50% drug testing and 10% alcohol testing for the consortium have been met by the end of the year.

IS THERE ANY TRAINING ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROGRAM?

Yes! Supervisors are required to complete the "Reasonable Suspicion Training" every two years. Employees must complete the "Substance "Abuse in the Workplace Training" every two years. Both trainings are available on the ComplianceOne website.

STAY UP TO DATE!

As a transit manager, it is your responsibility to stay informed of any changes that are made to the U.S. DOT regulations. National RTAP strongly recommends checking the FTA Drug and Alcohol Program web page and subscribing to FTA's Drug and Alcohol Regulation Updates newsletters.

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IMPLEMENTING MICROTRANSIT IN SMALL URBAN AND RURAL AREAS

By Nikhila Gunda, Kansas RTAP

Public transit is essential to building strong, successful communities. To address present and future needs, the public transportation sector is incorporating a wide range of travel methods and technology. Some popular forms of transportation being implemented include, "shared mobility," "microtransit," and "shared micromobility." The purpose of this article is to define microtransit and provide examples of implementation in small urban and rural locations.

WHAT IS MICROTRANSIT?

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) defines microtransit as “a privately owned and operated shared transportation system that can offer fixed routes and schedules, as well as flexible routes and on-demand scheduling. The vehicles generally include vans and buses” (Whitaker & Derk, 2018). Microtransit has become a popular solution for areas that are underserved by transit or lack access to fixed-route public transit (Phillips, 2021). Though the term “microtransit” is used as an alternate to demand-responsive transit (DRT) in most locations, the difference between these two modes is that microtransit is more tech-enabled. This includes an automated platform that considers specific rider needs and integrates scheduled trip requests simultaneously.

Microtransit uses sophisticated technology platforms that combine historical and real-time data to streamline operations for scheduling and dispatching on-demand transit needs. These platforms are more user-friendly than manually run DRT where riders must call in a trip request to the dispatcher days or weeks ahead of time. In small urban and rural areas, microtransit is being implemented to meet modern-day expectations of cost-effective, efficient travel. Microtransit has been growing in popularity around the country because it offers many benefits such as cash-free payment options, flexible on-demand transit needs. These platforms are more user-friendly than manually run DRT where riders must call in a trip request to the dispatcher days or weeks ahead of time. In small urban and rural areas, microtransit is being implemented to meet modern-day expectations of cost-effective, efficient travel. Microtransit has been growing in popularity around the country because it offers many benefits such as cash-free payment options, flexible on-demand service, user-friendly apps, and turnkey operations. This mode has also been proven to reduce traffic congestion by routing vehicles to avoid busy areas and construction work zones in real-time (Vik Hansen, 2021). For instance, Medicine Hat, a city in Alberta, has reduced the number of vehicle miles traveled 75% by using microtransit service through the on-demand system, Spare. (Vik Hansen, 2021).

> *‘Microtransit is simply tech enabled shared transportation that lives in the space between traditional fixed route transit and ride hailing technology. Its routes are nimble; its “schedules” aren’t really schedules at all, as they shift constantly based on rider demand; and its vehicles range in size from vans, shuttles, or buses.’ Via Transportation*

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Microtransit and ride-hailing services like Uber and Lyft are comparable in many aspects, but they differ in that microtransit is incorporated into a broader transit network. Riders who use microtransit typically use smartphone programs developed by third parties like Via and TransLoc to request rides. The algorithm of the operating platform compares all requests to the fleet that is available and assigns passengers accordingly for the most efficient transportation. Riders can even make reaching their destination more direct by boarding a microtransit vehicle from a “virtual bus stop” - a location used as a potential ‘stop’ in corner-to-corner mobility services, which can be a bus stop or any other identifiable location, such as a business, street corner, etc. (On-Demand Microtransit Glossary, 2021). With features like digital payment, seat reservations, and real-time traffic updates, this automated routing is adaptable and efficient.

Can microtranist benefit rural areas? Yes! Small population areas with low transit demand are implementing microtransit models. These areas may offer a standalone service, or may supplement a traditional fixed-route service as a feeder or first- and last-mile service. During periods of low demand, this service will be more affordable, efficient, and appealing than fixed-route transit.

CASE STUDIES

Most often, microtransit services are established in areas with lower populations where fixed routes for buses have never been established or have proven too costly to operate. Areas far from urban cores are not being effectively served by agencies’ transit offerings. Hence, transit agencies in these areas are currently adopting microtransit programs based on their unmet transit needs. Below are two cities that have successfully implemented microtransit in their regions.

Wilson, North Carolina– Wilson, the county seat of Wilson County, North Carolina, has an estimated population of 50,000 and a total area of 32 square miles. Wilson’s bus system was first introduced in the 1960s and was designed for commuters working in downtown Wilson. However, as the economy and community evolved, the bus network failed to serve those commuting to jobs away from the city center.

Figure 1: Wilson, NC - RIDE-Microtransit Service

In July 2019, Wilson partnered with Via to implement a comprehensive overhaul of its public transit system. Via replaced Wilson’s fixed route network with an entirely on-demand transit system, called RIDE, in September 2019. With a fleet of 10 on-demand vans, RIDE provides residents with corner-to-corner service throughout the whole city of Wilson. RIDE guarantees accessibility for all Wilson residents by providing wheelchair-accessible vehicles, phone booking for clients without cellphones, and payment methods for individuals who are unbanked. Customers pay a flat $1.50 fee for trips anywhere inside the city. RIDE offers free or significantly reduced fares for the elderly and riders with disabilities

Since its introduction, RIDE has increased Wilson residents' mobility. The Via Rider app is used to book rides by 75% of clients, and users gave the app a 4.9/5 average rating. Without increasing the transit budget, RIDE has increased transit coverage from about 40% of the city to 100%. Additionally, Via and Wilson implemented targeted marketing and community outreach initiatives that have significantly increased ridership. Wilson's fixed-route system saw 275 daily riders prior to COVID, and 55 rides were made each day following the start of the pandemic. Only a few months after its debut, RIDE offered more than 300 rides per day. Wilson and Via collaborated closely to help the city extend service hours by winning a competitive grant from the Federal

Transit Administration's (FTA) Accelerating Innovative Mobility program. Wilson's unemployment was long considered to be largely due to the lack of transit choices and/or mobility options to their employment locations; nevertheless, public transportation now fosters economic growth by adding more hours. Wilson's example shows that rural communities can use microtransit to encourage mobility by offering dependable and accessible transportation to employment sites, healthcare facilities, and local businesses (RIDE Wilson, NC, 2021).

Lone Tree, Colorado - Lone Tree, Colorado is a growing Denver suburb with approximately 14,000 individuals spread across a total of 10 square miles. The community is also home to many regional employers, including a Charles Schwab regional office, SkyRidge and UC Health Lone Tree medical facilities, the University of Colorado-South Denver, and the Park Meadows and Heritage Hills retail malls.

Figure 2: Lone Tree, CO - Link - Microtransit Service

To give residents of Lone Tree easy access to Denver's regional transportation system and to locations within their city, the city introduced Lone Tree Link (Link On-Demand) as a test on-demand transit option in 2016. In late 2018, Lone Tree decided to switch from its prior on-demand transit technology provider to Via to improve services by raising ridership and lowering cost per passenger. Via collaborated with Lone Tree to construct a system that offers a shared-ride substitute for the usage of private vehicles and establishes "links" to local transit, including a light rail connection to Denver. With proprietary dispatch tools and thorough data reporting services that the city's former technology provider did not offer, Via's solution offers Lone Tree increased service visibility in addition to efficiency gains.

Compared to prior service, which only offered 20,000 trips in the 16 months, Link On-Demand with Via has already seen notable success, offering over 12,000 rides —almost 1,000 every week. The cost per passenger has decreased over 30% from the prior service while ridership has increased. The city has established itself as a regional innovator in public transit by utilizing ride-hailing technology for the benefit of the public with an enhanced on-demand service that provides better routing and matching algorithms. Despite its small size, Lone Tree's Link On-Demand has already had a significant influence on the neighborhood and encourages other municipal government organizations to reconsider and reinvest in cutting-edge public transit strategies (Lone Tree Link, 2020).

CONCLUSION

In hard-to-serve areas, such as rural or suburban communities, microtransit fills a gap by being a flexible service. In Kansas, it has been implemented successfully in Johnson County, Kansas, and pilots are being planned for other areas of the state. With the increase in communities opting for microtransit, there will be additional data about the cost-effectiveness of this service model in different types of communities. Kansas RTAP will continue to report on the growth of microtransit and its effectiveness in meeting community mobility needs.

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COMPANY POLICY FOR WHEELCHAIR SECUREMENT

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

"What is your agency policy on wheelchair securement and occupant securement?" Blank stares from the drivers in the training session meet me. I cringe as some offer up responses that start off, "I think our policy is..." Transit agencies need thorough policies, but more importantly, drivers need to know and understand those policies. This article will examine aspects of wheelchair securement that agencies should have policies on and why drivers need to understand these policies.

Liability and Regulations

It is important that drivers understand that improper securement puts the passengers that use wheelchairs at risk of injury, which is a liability to agencies. Regardless of underlying circumstances, like fatigue, tardiness, distractions, or technical difficulties, drivers are responsible for always ensuring proper securement. A driver once told me that if the wheelchair was too large and they could not get to two securement points, they would just leave the chair unsecured at the two securement points closest to the wall of the bus – a major liability to the agency if something were to go wrong. Proper training and an agency policy that states that all four securement points should be engaged and the lap and shoulder belts will be used, could have helped to prevent this situation from occurring.

Agencies that promote safety practices encourage drivers to be aware of unsafe situations and work towards preventing them. With set policies, agencies can promote proper driver training, consistent equipment maintenance, and enhanced passenger cooperation.

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Drivers must be trained to be proficient in wheelchair and occupant securement as well as agency policies and procedures. Drivers should receive ongoing training over this material so that they can effectively make knowledgeable decisions when needed. For instance, in transport, a driver may need to answer questions on why securement is important or let passengers know that lap and shoulder belts are required and cannot be replaced with the belts connected to the wheelchair. Answering the passenger's concerns through agency policy and not "because I said so" works at providing good customer service and consistency for all passengers.

Agency policy can help to regulate equipment maintenance. Proper inspection of the lift and securement equipment will ensure that it is in good working condition. These policies can also encourage the proper use of equipment, such as putting the securement devices into their holding bag after each use as the equipment is not made to be permanently secured to the floor. One time, while providing an agency with training, we went out to the bus to find the retractors were rusted in the tracks and could not be moved—another liability to the agency if the equipment had malfunctioned due to lack of proper care and maintenance

Consistent policies and procedures can also help with passenger cooperation. If drivers are consistent in securement practices and agency policies, riders are more likely to be content. However, if one driver allows the passenger not to wear the lap and shoulder belt to avoid confrontation and the next driver follows policy and requires it, the passenger can be left feeling confused and frustrated.

Listening to driver feedback is a great way to add and adjust agency policies. Drivers know the routes in their community and are more aware of their passengers and individual behaviors. For instance, if a driver comes forth with information about a difficult wheelchair to secure and wants more time to secure it, the agency should be ready to help them. Giving drivers the ability to make suggestions and see them through helps them feel included in the process.

Americans with Disability Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) final rule 49 CFR Parts 37 and 38 was enacted in 1990 based on Congressional findings that discrimination against individuals with disabilities was a major social concern. The purpose of the ADA is "to provide a clear and comprehensive national mandate for the elimination of discrimination against individuals with disabilities." The ADA needs to be incorporated into agency policies and procedures. The sidebar lists ADA sections to be added to agency policies.

Definition of a Wheelchair

- Section 37.3 of the DOT regulations implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) (49 CFR Parts 27, 37, and 38) defines a "wheelchair" as a mobility aid belonging to any class of three or more wheeled devices, usable indoors, designed or modified for and used by individuals with mobility impairments, whether operated manually or powered.

Nondiscrimination

- It is not discrimination under ADA for an entity to refuse to provide service to an individual with disabilities because that individual engages in violent, illegal conduct, seriously disruptive or a direct threat to the safety of others.
- No entity shall discriminate against an individual with a disability in connection with the provision of transportation service
- An entity shall not, on the basis of disability, deny to any individual with a disability the opportunity to use the entity's transportation service for the general public, if the individual is capable of using that service
- An entity shall not require an individual with a disability to use designated priority seats, if the individual does not choose to use these seats
- An entity shall not impose special charges on individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs, for providing services required by the ADA or otherwise necessary to accommodate them

Assisting individuals with Disabilities

- Under Department of Transportation (DOT) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations at 49 C.F.R. Section 37.165(f), transit entity personnel must assist individuals with disabilities with the use of ramps, lifts, and securement systems.

Respectful and Courteous

- 49 CFR Part 37 TRANSPORTATION SERVICES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES (ADA), Subpart G Provision of Service, § 37.173 Training requirements states that each public or private entity which operates a fixed route or demand responsive system shall ensure that personnel are trained to proficiency, as appropriate to their duties, so that they operate vehicles and equipment safely and properly assist and treat individuals with disabilities who use the service in a respectful and courteous way, with appropriate attention to the difference among individuals with disabilities.

Seatbelt and Lap belt

- While Department of Transportation (DOT) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulation 49 C.F.R. 38.23(d)(7) requires a seatbelt and shoulder harness to be provided as part of the wheelchair securement system, passengers with disabilities cannot be required to use the seatbelt and shoulder harness unless all passengers are provided with seatbelts and shoulder harnesses and are required to use them. Since few fixed route buses are equipped with seatbelts and shoulder harnesses for all passengers, their use cannot be required for passengers with disabilities. In the case of paratransit vehicles, seatbelts and shoulder harnesses may indeed be available for all passengers, and if all passengers are required to make use of them, passengers with disabilities occupying the securement location may also be required to do so. Note, however, that in some cases the use of seatbelts themselves may be more harmful to passengers with certain types of disabilities than riding without them. Most state seatbelt laws recognize this and provide for exceptions; policies concerning seatbelt use aboard transit vehicles should provide for similar exceptions.

BEST PRACTICES TIPS FOR SECURING THE WHEELCHAIR AND THE OCCUPANT

Three Principles for Securing the Wheelchair

Once the wheelchair is positioned into the wheelchair securement area, place the retractors into the floor anchorages. The rear retractors are placed on the inside frame of the wheelchair. This is because from an engineering perspective, the rear retractors are stopping the forward momentum of the wheelchair.

The front retractors are the opposite of the rear retractors. Place the front retractors on the outside set of tracks or wider than the frame of the wheelchair. The front retractors stabilize the wheelchair.

The first principle of wheelchair securement is the placing of the S/J hook of the retractor to the frame of the wheelchair. To place the hook, look for a solid frame member of the wheelchair that is sturdy enough to withstand a crash. Look for solid frame members, solid welds or harden bolts. Avoid removeable parts (arm rest or leg rest), any part with wiring and tires.

The second principle of wheelchair securement is to attach as close to the seat as possible to achieve a 45-degree angle. The range can be for the front between 40- degrees and 60- degrees, and the rear is between 30-degrees and 45-degrees. This is important to achieve a 45-degree angle because this puts downward pressure on the wheelchair and keeps it in place during routine driving.

The third principle of securing a wheelchair is a direct path from securement point to the retractor. The retractor belts should never pass-through wheels, over armrests, or cross belts.

Finally, the driver is not responsible for the types of chairs the passenger uses. The driver is responsible for getting as close to the three principles (solid frame member, 45-degree angle and direct path) for securing a wheelchair as possible.

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Three Principles for Securing the Occupant

Retractors only secure the wheelchair. Occupant secures the passenger to help keep them contained in the wheelchair securement area. According to Q'Straint training, most wheelchair transport injuries are the result of incorrectly used occupant securement. If a passenger leaves the wheelchair during a sudden stop or crash the injuries are likely to be catastrophic.

The first principle of occupant securement is lap belt and shoulder belt positioning. The lap belt needs to fit snug across the pelvis area. It is common for the belt to ride up the torso, especially if the passenger slouches in their chair or has a heavy coat on. The shoulder belt is designed to be located above and behind the passenger's shoulder. This should be considered when placing the wheelchair in the securement area. The wheelchair needs to be close to the side of the bus so the shoulder belt will pull over in the correct position.

The second principle of occupant securement is that the red release buckle is all the way over to the aisle side hip of the passengers. The buckle should not be on soft tissue.

The third principle of occupant securement is belts must not be held away from the body by wheelchair components such as armrests or wheels.

In attaching the occupant restraints first start with the aisle side lap belt, and then move to the shoulder belt. Pull as much webbing out of the retractor for the shoulder belt. This allows you to step back from the passenger instead of reaching across the passenger's body. Attach the lap belt to the shoulder belt and then tighten the belts.

Securing Difficult Chairs

Securement problems start with the wheelchairs that are currently on the market such as the Pride Jazzy, Permobil and Invacare that were not designed to be transported. Yet, as a transportation provider, under ADA you must transport these chairs. Furthermore, the securement equipment that is used in transportation is being attached to wheelchairs that are not designed to be secured. This makes the wheelchair the weakest link in the securement process. Secondly, wheelchairs have gotten bigger and powerchairs are becoming more popular, but the securement area has not changed in area size.

One tip to secure difficult chairs is using webbing loops where hooks cannot be fitted onto the wheelchair frame. A second tip is to mark attachment points on the wheelchair to supply securement consistency. Finally, use the retractors to help in tight spaces. Automatic retractors allow you to attach the front or rear retractors and then move the wheelchair into the securement area.

Summary

In sum, agency policies help develop a culture of safety. It provides drivers with resources and training to be good at their jobs. It is important that ADA is in your agency policy and that drivers know and understand the policy. Finally, drivers should know the three principles of wheelchair securement and the three principles of occupant securement. The closer the driver is to obtaining the three principles for wheelchair and occupant securement the closer you are to safer transportation.

RESOURCES

Federal Transit Agency Frequently Asked Questions. (n.d.). Federal Transit Administration. Retrieved June 20, 2022, from https://www.transit.dot.gov/regulations-and-guidance/civil-rights-ada/frequently-asked-questions

Q'Straint and Sure-Lok. (2019, July 24). Liability and regulations [Training Seminar]. Q'Straint Training Seminar, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, United States.

Q'Straint and Sure-Lok. (2019b, July 24). Securement principles [Training Seminar]. Q'Straint and Sure-Lok National Training Seminar, FT Lauderdale, Florida, United States.

BEST PRACTICES FOR INTERVIEWING EMPLOYEE CANDIDATES

By Kara Cox, Kansas RTAP

"Now Hiring" signs decorate buildings and billboards across the nation as employers continue to struggle with filling vacant positions. Applicants for these positions are few and far between, so when a promising candidate arises, the next step is crucial: a successful interview. This article will look at some theories and techniques for conducting an effective interview.

PREPARING FOR THE INTERVIEW

The number one factor for an effective interview is RESEARCH! Get to know your candidate before the interview so you do not have to waste valuable time asking questions for answers you could already know the answers to. Study the candidate's resume. If they have a personal website or LinkedIn, study those. Not only does this save time in the interview, it shows the candidate that you are genuinely interested in them and their work.

Research ahead of time will also allow you to prepare questions that are specific to the candidate. It is fine to have generic questions targeted towards the position the candidate is applying for, but questions specifically for the candidate will provide further insight into their personality and work ethic.

Once you have a good foundation of research on your candidate, you are ready to start developing your questions. There are several different types of questions that warrant various degrees of response. While each type of question serves a purpose, there are also several question pitfalls to avoid.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Open questions invite open responses. Open questions allow the interviewee a considerable amount of freedom to determine how much information they want to provide. An open question cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." For the interviewer, these questions provide many advantages. These questions allow you to see how well a candidate can determine what information is most important to disclose. They can also warrant responses that offer more information that you might not have thought to ask about.

Examples of open questions:

- What do you know about our company/industry?
- What accomplishments are you most proud of?
- Why did you leave your previous position?

CLOSED QUESTIONS

Closed questions warrant restricted responses. With a closed question, you limit the interviewee's freedom to determine how much and what kind of information to disclose. Typically, a closed question will receive a short, specific answer. On one hand, closed questions allow the interviewer to control the length of the answers and guide the respondents to specific information. On the other hand, closed questions can limit the information given, meaning the interviewer must ask several more questions to get all the information needed.

Examples of closed questions:

- Are you an easy-going person?
- Are you more of an introvert or extrovert?
- How many languages do you speak at a conversational level?

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PRIMARY & PROBING QUESTIONS

Primary questions setup new topics and can stand alone when taken out of context while probing questions only make sense when they are following questions. Probing questions, or follow up questions, help dig into responses that require more information or clarification. These questions can be simple nudging like, “I see,” “Go on,” and “Yes?” The interviewer can also use silent gestures for probing like eye contact, a head nod, or gesturing.

Example of primary and probing questions:

- Interviewer (Primary): What did you do during your internship with KDOT (Kansas Department of Transportation)?
- Interviewee: I helped with office work.
- Interviewer (Probing): What kind of work?

QUESTION PITFALLS

1. The Tell Me Everything Question. This type of question can be intimidating to an interviewee because of how broad, or open, the question is. Example: Tell me about your work experience. The interviewee may not know where to begin, what to include, and how to end the answer. Instead, break this down into multiple questions so that the interviewee can provide answers that are to the point.

2. The Open-to-Close Question. This type of pitfall happens when you ask an open-ended question and then follow up with a close-ended question before allowing the interviewee to answer. Example: What were your job duties are your previous employer? Did you operate large machinery? Because the interviewee is not able to respond to the initial question, you may lose a significant portion of information.

3. The Guessing Question. This pitfall happens when you try to guess the information instead of asking for it. By doing this, you may fail at acquiring the information that a simple open-ended question could have obtained. Example: “Did your vehicle feel uneven after the tire blowout”? Instead, ask, “What did your vehicle feel like after the tire blowout?”

4. The Curious Question. This type of pitfall occurs when when you ask for information that is not needed. This could be personal information to the interviewee and the candidate has the right to not respond. If a question appears to be irrelevant, you should explain why the information is relevant or necessary.

Now that you have conducted your research and compiled your interview questions, it is time to focus on the structure of your interview.

STRUCTURING THE INTERVIEW

When opening an interview, it is important for both parties, the interviewer and the interviewee, to be motivated in participating and communicating freely. Therefore, the interviewer should steer the beginning of the interview towards open dialogue instead of opening with a monologue. Examining relational dimensions between the interviewer and interviewee can be an excellent place to get started. Interviewees are more likely to communicate openly if they know they share some common ground with the interviewer. This is called building rapport.

Establishing rapport is the process of building a relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee through feelings of kindness and trust. A simple greeting or tasteful humor paired with nonverbal gestures like a handshake and smile can go a long way. This phase of the interview does not need to be long, but it does need to be sincere.

Once introductions are done and some rapport has been established, confirm that the interviewee is oriented with the nature of the interview. Restate the purpose of the interview, the structure of the interview, and why or how they were selected.

After the orientation is established, it is time to move onto the questions you have prepared. While you may come into the interview with all the questions you think you will ever need, do not hesitate to ask questions that arise during the interview. Some of the best questions and responses can come from impromptu thoughts or ideas.

The conclusion of the interview is just as important as the

the opening. First, maintain the dialogue between the two parties instead of finishing with a monologue. This allows the interviewee to add any closing comments. Second, the interviewer should uphold a sense of honesty and sincerity in the closing. Do not make promises that you cannot keep. Third, do not rush the conclusion. This can leave the interviewee feeling dismissed and can damage any rapport that may have been established. Fourth, lay the groundwork for future contacts. If additional contact is planned, explain what will happen next and when it will happen.

CONCLUSION

With so many companies hiring, candidates have multiple options of employment. By setting up an interview for success, you make your agency a more desirable place to work. Show the interviewee you care. Not only does this improve your chances of successfully signing on a new employee, it lays the foundation of a healthy professional relationship with a potential employee.

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING, TRANSIT RESOURCES AND CONFERENCES

By Anne Lowder, Kansas RTAP

Below are trainings available from Kansas RTAP and other sources through October of this year. If you are interested in hosting a training class, I have openings for traveling to your location in July and August. Please contact Anne Lowder at alowder@ku.edu.

KANSAS RTAP TRAINING

August 3	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Dodge City
August 17	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Goodland
August 18	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Great Bend
September 7	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Pratt
September 14	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Emporia
September 21	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Wellington
September 22	Defensive Driving and Passengers Assistances	Iola
October 19	Defensive Driving and Emergency Procedures	Oakley

National Transit Institute (NTI)

The National Transit Institute (NTI) will continue to offer all courses virtually until 6/30/2022. Please follow this link to see NTI's scheduled webinars.

Rutgers University Division of Continuing Studies

EasterSeals Project Action Consulting

https://www.projectaction.com/courses-and-schedule/

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

- In-Person Training
- Online Courses
- Webinars

They also lead sessions at a variety of conferences around the country throughout the year.

NATIONAL RTAP ELEARNING

Transit resources https://www.nationalrtap.org

- 2 the Point Training
- Boards that Perform
- Customer Driven Service
- Dispatching and Scheduling Training for Rural Transit Systems
- Emergency Procedures for Rural Transit Drivers
- Essential Skills for Trainers
- Fundamental Financial Management for Rural Transit Agencies
- How to Buy a Vehicle
- Introduction to Preventative Maintenance
- Reasonable Suspicion Training for Supervisors
- Risk Management for Rural Transit Managers
- Roles & Responsibilities of Transit Managers
- Problem Passengers: Managing Difficult Passengers & Situations
- START (Safety Training and Rural Transit) and START Online
- Substance Abuse Awareness Training
- Top Shops: Emergency Management in Vehicle Maintenance Facilities
- Transportation Coordination

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 Center for Mobility Management (NCMM)

https://nationalcenterformobilitymanagement.org/

The National Center for Mobility Management is a national technical assistance center funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transit Administration and operated through a consortium of three national organizations—the American Public Transportation Association, the Community Transportation Association of America, and Easterseals Inc.

Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)

CTAA's COVID-19 Resource Portal
https://ctaa.org/covid-19-resources/

- COVID-19 Recovery vendor list for Public Transportation
- Recommended COVID-10 Safety Protocols
- Public Transportation's Response to COVID-19
- CTAA's Best Practices Toolkit

CTAA's Online Training Center
https://ctaa.org/one-stop-online-offerings/

CTAA's online classes are designed to take at your own pace, whenever it is convenient for you. Simply select the course you want to take, and you will be taken to the course page to either take the course — if it is free — or to the pay page and then the course. Courses include:

- Recruiting, Building and Retaining a Sustainable Driver Workforce
- Front Line Supervisor Training
- Excellence in Training: Train-the-Trainer
- Understanding Passengers Who Have Experienced Trauma
- Passenger Assistance, Safety and Sensitivity (PASS)
- Volunteer Driver Safety
- Conflict Management and De-escalation for Transit Drivers and Supervisors

Conferences

August 29 – August 31 Wichita, KS Kansas Public Transit Association Conference
https://kpta.wildapricot.org/events

September 12- 16, 2022 A TRB Virtual Event
TRANSED: Mobility, Accessibility, and Demand Response Transportation Conference
https://trb.secure-platform.com/a/page/TRANSED2022

September 19-22, 2022, Washington, D.C.
Conference on Scenario Planning in Transportation
https://trb.secure-platform.com/a/page/ScenarioPlanningHome

November 3-4, 2022, Washington, D.C.
TRB's Symposium on Visualization in Transportation
https://trb.secure-platform.com/a/page/VisualizationSymposium

May 21 – May 25, 2023, Oklahoma City Oklahoma, CTAA's EXPO 2023
https://www.showsbee.com/fairs/85308-CTAA-EXPO-2023.html

AT - A- GLANCE

EXPLORING KANSAS TRANSIT

WICHITA, KS
AUG 29, 30 & 31, 2022

Kansas PublicTransit ASSOCIATION

Monday 8-29

9:00 - Noon	RTAP Training - Mental Health First Aid Morning Session
Noon - 1:00	Lunch Break
1:00 - 5:00	RTAP Training - Mental Health First Aid Afternoon Session

Tuesday 8-30

8:30 - 9:00	Welcome and Vendor Introductions
9:00 - 10:00	Let's M.A.G.N.I.F.Y.
10:00 - 10:30	Break - Visit Exhibitors
10:30 - 11:30	Electification of Your Fleet
10:30 - 11:30	Recruitment, Retention, Reward: Strategies for making your life as a leader easier!
10:30 - 11:30	Regional Transit Planning
11:35 - 12:15	Plenary Session - KPTA Strategic Planning
12:15- 1:30	Lunch and Awards
1:30 - 2:30	Plenary Session - Transit Technology
2:35 - 3:35	Teamwork Makes the Dream Work: Collaboration and Coordination in Kansas
2:35 - 3:35	Urban and Rural Transit Facility Development
2:35 - 3:35	Mobility Management to Overcome Transportation Barriers
3:35 - 4:00	Break - Visit Exhibitors
4:00 - 5:00	Rethinking Traditional Service Delivery Models
4:00 - 5:00	Future Planning for Small Transit Agencies
4:00 - 5:00	Moving Kansas Forward Network - Attendance by Invitation

Wednesday 8-31

8:30 - 10:00	FTA Urban Meeting
8:30 - 10:00	KDOT Rural/Specialized Meeting
10:00 - 10:30	Break - Hotel Checkout
10:00 - 10:30	Low Cost Digital Storytelling and Marketing
10:00 - 10:30	Extending the Life of Your Transit Vehicles
11:30 - 12:30	KPTA Annual Meeting

Register at: https://kpta.wildapricot.org/event-4814337

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

By Lisa Koch, Kansa RTAP

What were you doing in 1987? As a Generation X'er, my favorite movies were Dirty Dancing and Overboard and I loved Debbie Gibson, Tiffany and Janet Jackson. On summer vacation, I rode my pink Schwinn bike to the local swimming pool almost every day. The ride was a little over a mile, which included climbing a steep hill and crossing a busy four lane street. Riding that bike all over town, and the independence it gave me, created the foundational experiences for my future career in mobility. I felt the freest on that bike; I could choose where I wanted to go, when I wanted to go.

It has been 35 years since 1987...the year that Kansas RTAP began. That's right! Kansas RTAP is old enough to run for president! We are so proud of Kansas RTAP's history and will be celebrating our birthday with all of you for the remainder of 2022, including a week of celebration that is planned for this fall.

Thanks to all of you for your partnership; whether you have been with us for 35 years or a few months, you make our jobs fun and fulfilling! We look forward to celebrating this milestone birthday with you

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.