



FEATURE

## The Economic Impact of Public Transportation in Rural Kansas

By Nate Vander Broek and Pat Weaver

*Rural regional transit service makes good financial sense.*



**A**llocation of resources on public transportation services is an especially critical question at all levels of government in these difficult economic conditions. Are we spending our scarce resources for the most efficient and effective outcomes? Are our expenditures essential to the economic and social health of our communities? Understanding the economic impact of transit services helps answer these questions.

The needs are critical. Workers in rural communities travel an average of 40 percent longer distances to work than their counterparts in urban areas: 12.5 miles each way compared with 8.9 miles, respectively (1). Many rural residents also have long commutes for medical care, particularly

*Continued on page 2*

MANAGEMENT

## Bus Stop Maintenance in Winter — Whose Job is it?

By Matthew Barnett

**W**hile many of us prefer to avoid driving much in the winter, transit agencies continue to provide service to the community. Riders will need to get to their bus stops in the cold weather, but new or accumulated snow and ice may

cause trouble when they try to access these stops. The maintenance of bus stops is an important part of the transit service provided to the community, and it raises a few questions among both riders and providers: Whose responsibility is it to maintain the sidewalks by bus stops? Who maintains the pad at bus stops? Whose duty is it to clean the bus shelters? All of

these are good questions, and we will answer them in this article on bus stop maintenance.

### Who is responsible?

The responsibility of maintaining a bus stop should be determined before the stop becomes operational. Unfortunately, that

*Continued on page 6*

## INSIDE

Customer-driven service . . . . .	Page 7	National RTAP's website building tool . . . . .	Page 12
Are you ready for a transit rodeo in your region? . . . . .	Page 9	Resources . . . . .	Page 15
Documenting injuries and crashes (and avoiding them) . . . . .	Page 11	Training calendar . . . . .	Page 16

## Economic benefits of rural public transportation *Continued from page 1*

when specialized treatment is necessary. As the cost of gasoline continues to increase, rural workers bear a disproportionate burden on access to jobs; access to health care can be compromised.

A study on dialysis patients in Kansas found that patients often have to travel long distances to receive treatment. For example, in Hays, the average roundtrip to dialysis treatment is 114 miles. In Liberal, the average roundtrip is even higher at 122 miles (2). Veterans, especially those living in western Kansas, must also travel long distances to receive treatment at VA hospitals. Only three major VA facilities serve all of Kansas—located in Wichita, Topeka and Leavenworth (3).

From 2000 to 2010, transit ridership in Kansas increased from 2 million rides to 8 million rides per year (4). Providing transit services in rural Kansas helps not only to provide its residents with access to social and medical services, but also to keep the community economically viable in the future by providing access to jobs, education and shopping.

As Kansas communities focus on strategies to create an economic environment to attract and maintain jobs, it is critical that communities work together to plan regional transit services that get individuals where they need to go. Regional transit creates opportunities for rural residents to find work or employees in neighboring communities, obtain specialized health services when necessary and to live independently as they age.

This fact sheet explores the economic impact of regionalized, coordinated transit services.

### What is transit coordination?

Coordination is about managing resources and sharing decision-making among organizations working together for a common goal. It encompasses management, resources, cost-effectiveness, broad perspectives, multiple stakeholders, cooperation and action. Coordinating transit service might take the form of developing a new agency, expanding the role of an existing agency, or reallocating responsibility among existing agencies in a service area, depending on travel markets, capacity of existing services and funding streams.



**Public transportation is an economic investment.** For every \$1 invested in rural public transportation, approximately \$3-\$4 in economic returns is generated.



**Public transportation is key to an economically viable rural community.** Good transit coverage provides more people with access to jobs, education, health services and shopping—all of which improves the local economy.



**Public transit grows earnings.** In a study that looked at 268 rural commuting zones that included counties with and without transit service, rural counties with transit service were found to have 11 percent greater net earnings growth over counties without transit. Net earnings reflect both changes in wages and changes in number of jobs.

Source: TCRP Report 34 (5).



*Mason Transit in Shelton, WA, purchased the downtown Shelton Armory with plans to develop a combined community center and expanded transit center.*

Mason Transit

### **Transit coordination generates revenue when...**

- The transit agency provides Medicaid or other human service trips under contract to human service agencies.
- Transit systems in some states have realized cost-benefits through cooperative agreements with their school districts and on Head Start Programs.

### **Coordination saves costs when...**

- Human service agencies (or other low-cost operators) provide ADA or other paratransit services under contract to the regional transit authority.
- Incentives or travel training programs are offered to shift demand-response riders to more efficient services such as fixed route.
- Human service agencies coordinate some or all functions of their transportation programs. (7)

*Regional transit coordination can create operating efficiencies and save tax dollars while improving the reach of service and increasing the number of riders.*

### **How does regional coordination benefit services?**

A major concern for transit providers and riders in rural Kansas is that transit providers only serve an area within their city or county. For someone who must use transit, it may become a major obstacle when medical, social and human services are not available in their home community. This is why transit coordination in rural communities only makes sense in a regional context. It allows rural residents to continue living in their home community and have access to employment, health care providers, social services and other essential services which may not be available in their home community. It also provides economic benefits by providing businesses, health care providers and education centers with a larger service area and more customers.

Regional coordination can help share costs with other agencies for greater investment in technology. In Kansas, KDOT is providing resources to acquire technology to support centralized schedule dispatching and to improve efficiency and service through “one-call” ride scheduling and dispatching. Regional coordination also saves costs by minimizing duplication of service and costs of administrative functions (8) (9).

### **Economic impact of regional coordinated services**

On the next page are a few examples from TCRP Report 91 about how some communities are saving money through regional, coordinated transit systems (7).

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### **Economic Benefits of Coordination**

- Coordinated services have access to more funds and more sources of funds because they are not dependent on only one funding source.
- Centralized control and management of resources may lead to higher quality and more cost-effective services.
- Coordination helps to fill in service gaps within existing budgets.
- Provides trips to customers at lower costs.
- More trips are provided in the community, enhancing livability and providing economic benefits to their communities.
- Trip cost is reduced by providing more trips per vehicle mile or hour.
- Increased levels of economic development in the community or employment benefits for those persons associated with the transportation service.

### **Costs of Coordination**

- Time spent to ensure that the services provided in a regional system meet the needs of the participating communities.
- Time to develop an agreed-upon cost allocation plan that distributes costs across a regional area fairly.
- Effort to identify and secure sources of local match which serve the needs of a regional system.
- Developing a process to centralize knowledge of the requirements of multiple, more diverse funding sources that become part of the regional system: funding cycles, continuity of funding, reporting requirements, etc.
- Time to monitor and conform with regulatory requirements associated with crossing county and/or state boundaries.

Source: TCRP Report 101 (6).

## Economic benefits of rural public transportation *Continued from page 3*

**Dodger Area Rapid Transit System (DART) in Fort Dodge, Iowa** saves \$20,000 a year by spreading staff costs over multiple contracts. DART operates a small urban transit system in Fort Dodge (population 25,000), the regional transit service in the six counties and the school bus service.

**R.Y.D.E. (Reach Your Destination Easily) in Buffalo County, Nebraska** operates the first brokered transit system in Nebraska. A brokered transit system is when a single organization handles the passenger reservations and schedules daily vehicle runs. It then assigns the schedule to the service operators under contract with the broker. R.Y.D.E. Transit's current coordinated operations have reduced the cost of providing public transportation with computerized dispatch, reduced the amount of trip overlap, improved coordination between rides, and lowered the amount of time passengers spend on the transit bus. R.Y.D.E. Transit has also expanded operating hours and expanded transportation access in rural Buffalo County. R.Y.D.E. Transit contracts with the local taxicab company in Kearney with a cab ticket program to provide after-hours transportation. Annual rides increased from 11,000 in 2002 to an estimated 80,000 in 2010.

**Lane Transit District (LTD) in Eugene, Oregon.** While Eugene, a city of approximately 150,000 people, has a larger service area population than most rural transit agencies, it provides some good examples of coordinating human services. In 2008, LTD created the RideSource Call Center to improve coordination and simplify access for those who need transportation that requires unique features or fulfills an agency standard. This "one-stop" center uses an array of public, non-profit, and private transportation providers, such as non-emergency medical transportation provided through the Department of Human Services Medicaid program, RideSource complementary paratransit for those who are unable to use regular fixed-route service due to a disability as required under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and senior and disabled services community transportation for eligible individuals who live in community residential rather than more formal institutional settings. Everyone receiving transportation through the RideSource Call Center is evaluated to determine the most appropriate and least cost transportation choices based on their needs and circumstances. Through the RideSource Call Center, as of June 2011, LTD serves 2,800 customers, taking approximately 18,000 phone calls and arranging nearly 27,000 one-way trips each month (10).

**Mountain Empire Transit in Southwestern Virginia.** Mountain Empire Older Citizens, Inc. (MEOC), based in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, has spent 30 years building a coordinated transportation program in a 3-county area serving a population of approximately 91,000 people. Through coordination, they are able to provide service to more people without duplication of resources. Rather than five or more agencies using separate vehicles and drivers to traverse the same area, a single agency is able to serve all these clients with far fewer total resources. This provides a savings to the participating agencies as well as a savings to the taxpayers who are not paying five or more times for transportation in the same geographic area into separate funding streams. This economic efficiency does not reduce the attention to individual client needs. Extensive interagency training and cooperation and innovation in problem solving keeps client needs uppermost in everyone's mind. Partnerships are vital for sustainability. Although all partners are valuable, financial burdens and unforeseen circumstances could eliminate partners without warning. It is critical for an agency to aggressively pursue new partners and maintain existing partners.

### **In sum**

It is critical that Kansas communities work together to plan regional transit services, not only because it helps individuals get where they need to go, but also because it builds an economic environment that attracts and maintains jobs. It is time to think about how coordination, especially at a regional level, could improve your local economy, cut transit costs, and provide the necessary transportation services that will allow more people to continue living in their home town. Talk to your neighboring communities, human services coordinator, or transit agency to discuss the benefits of coordination.

The information in this article is also available in fact sheet form. Go to <http://www.ksrtap.org>, click on "Resources to Download," and scroll down to the section on Kansas Regional Transit Pilot Program Planning.

*Regional coordination can help  
share costs with other agencies  
for greater investment in  
technology.*



## Rural Transit Trips with the Largest Economic Benefit

- **Trips that provide access to employment.** When someone who does not own a car or who is disabled has been given access to employment through public transportation, it allows the person to support herself—increasing personal income, paying taxes and reducing dependency on welfare—as well as providing many personal benefits.
- **Trips for education and training.** Providing access to education, training and counseling services increases the chances of finding long-term employment at decent wages. A well trained and educated workforce is attractive to existing and potential new business. Well-paid jobs mean higher income and increased economic benefits to the community.
- **Trips that enhance opportunities for independent living.** Transit trips from seniors who are able to remain living at home instead of moving to a nursing home provide economic benefits to the community. A case study in Sweetwater, Wyoming found that independent living enabled by the transit system provided a benefit of \$24 per trip devoted to independent living activities, such as nutrition and shopping trips. These trips represented 40% of all the system's trips.

Source: TCRP Report 34 (5).

KUTC / N. Vander Broek

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## Bus stop maintenance in winter *Continued from page 1*



www.shutterstock.com / Bronwyn Photo

*Responsibility for snow and ice removal at transit stops is not cut and dried. It depends on who owns the property. One thing is certain, though: It has to be done.*

### Examples of Bus Stop Maintenance in Kansas

#### **Salina's OCK:**

Pat Wallerius of Salina, Kansas' OCK helped answer some questions about bus stop maintenance in winter in Salina for its new transit service. Wallerius said that under an agreement with the City of Salina, OCK is responsible for maintaining concrete pad stops, including snow and ice removal and emptying trash, but that currently no pads exist, only plans for pads. When the pads are operational, it will be OCK's responsibility to maintain the pads and any sidewalk in front of those pads. However, any sidewalk not in front of the pads is the property owner's responsibility. Their other stops are located on grass, and they are not maintained.

When asked how quickly bus stops would be cleaned or cleared after a winter storm, Wallerius replied, "We will schedule daily cleaning of the [bus] shelters, more often if necessary. Snow removal will occur as soon as possible at all stops with pads." Wallerius went on to say that transfer stations and shelters will be first priority. Wallerius also told me that trash is emptied daily.

#### **Lawrence Transit:**

Wendy Koerner, transportation program specialist for the Lawrence, Kansas "T", said they use a private contractor to remove snow and ice and place sand and ice-melting products at transit shelters and wheelchair landing pads. "Adjacent property owners are responsible for removing snow and ice from the sidewalks," she said. Koerner explained that a private company cleans and provides light maintenance to bus shelters. Shelters are washed every two weeks, and trash is picked up on a weekly basis. When asked how quickly snow removal occurs during a storm she responded, "Action is determined on an individual event basis since each storm event is different. Occasionally as a preemptive measure we have sand or ice melting products placed at the beginning of a storm."

Lawrence has two priority hubs that are addressed first, and the remaining shelters are done as the contractor is able. Occasionally, when a "snow hump" is present on the curb from streets being plowed, passengers can't board the bus. To address this, Koerner said that the Lawrence City Public Works Department coordinates with them to help remove the humps. General maintenance practices are the same in winter as any other season, with the exception that if the temperature goes below 32 degrees Fahrenheit, the shelters are not washed.

is not always the case. The potential parties that hold responsibility for the stop include the city, the transit agency, property owners, volunteers, contractors, or any combination of the five.

Maintenance should be decided and agreed upon in writing to avoid any

confusion. Depending on who takes on responsibility, liability for general tort issues can still be placed on different entities for different reasons. It's best to have active participation from all parties involved.

The Transit Cooperative Research Program, sponsored by the Federal Transit

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## Tips for a Tip-Top Bus Stop

1. Determine responsibility for maintenance and snow removal before a stop is opened.
2. Have a written agreement between the parties involved.
3. Coordinate with other relevant government entities.
4. Use contracts with individuals or companies, if needed.
5. Listen to your riders, and address their concerns as best you can.

Administration, in the article “Transit Bus Stops: Ownership, Liability, and Access,” explains that “Ordinarily, a governmental entity has a duty to keep its streets and sidewalks in a reasonably safe condition. In addition, there is a general duty of reasonable care to maintain the sidewalk in front of a bus stop, as a part of the property owner’s ‘general duty to exercise reasonable care in maintaining [a] public space in a safe condition.’”

Generally, if a stop is on public property, it’s the duty of the city to maintain it. But the city could contract the transit agency to maintain it. If a stop is on

private property, a mall for example, the owner usually coordinates with the city or agency, but if not, it could become the mall property owner’s sole responsibility. One possible solution is to have volunteers from businesses at the mall help keep the stop clean.

### Conclusion

To help ensure a safe environment for your riders and reduce the possibility of an injury-related lawsuit if someone falls at a bus stop, make sure you have a plan for snow and ice removal at all your stops before the snow flies. ●

## MARKETING

# Providing Customer-Driven Service

By Nora Fairchild

*New National RTAP training module and material provide resources to agencies to move from good service to **exceptional** service.*

**W**ould you love to work at an agency that not only provides exceptional customer service but also has a thriving and enjoyable work environment? The National Rural Transit Assistance Program created a package of learning tools that can help anyone in an agency—from a dispatcher to a driver—cultivate skills that can make customers happy and boost employee morale.

A webinar on the topic on July 22, 2011 provided basic information on the concept of customer-driven service. During the webinar, Michael Noel of Larzaro and Noel LLC and an expert on customer service, said that the benefits of customer service go beyond one-on-one interactions with your customers. Customer service is also a reflection of an organization. Exceptional customer service sticks in customers’ minds, providing a return on investment for the agency as a whole.

Noel also said that customer service is important because of the huge impact it can make on someone. As an example, Noel mentioned a woman’s obituary that said that in the last years of her life, transit services gave her dignity.

This article will expand on the broader meaning of customer-driven service and will also provide overviews of the RTAP Learner’s Guide, Instructor’s Guide, and Self-Paced Program.



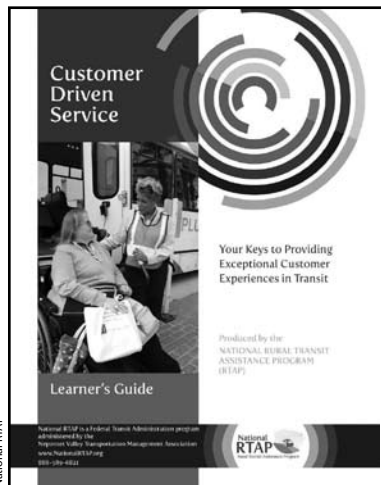
*Any of your employees can provide a “moment of truth” for a customer that causes the customer to see the entire agency in a negative or positive light.*

### Customer service starts with you...

...Or any member of an agency, really. RTAP’s customer-driven service Learner’s Guide explains that everyone in an agency affects his or her coworkers’ customer service abilities. In a chain reaction, a dispatcher’s bad mood could affect the

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## Customer-driven service *Continued from page 7*



*National RTAP's Learner's Guide is a great resource for improving customer service. See download information at right.*

driver's mood who, in turn, might treat the mechanic or transit customer poorly.

Work ethic and morale are key concepts in the National RTAP's guides. If employees can keep the right mindset, potential conflicts with customers can end up being more pleasant experiences. One suggestion from the webinar was to keep the customer's goals and needs in mind. When customers are agitated because they can't

find the information they need, it isn't constructive to belittle them or sarcastically tell them that the answer was under their nose—instead try to keep in mind that they just need to get to their destinations, and that you're there to help. This is what Michael Noel called “beginning with the end in mind;” don't focus on the circumstances of an interaction, but try to get the customer what's needed.

Even a person who does not physically assist riders, like a receptionist, matters a great deal when it comes to customer service. Sometimes he or she can provide the customer with what the Guide refers to as a “moment of truth,” in which the customer sees something or interacts with someone that makes them judge the entire agency in a positive or negative way. “You can't have lousy morale and great customer service,” says Noel.

One transit agency putting customer-driven service into practice is TriCounty Link, the public rural transportation provider for Berkeley, Charleston, and Dorchester Counties in South Carolina. Rapid growth in the agency over the past seven years changed the agency from what was once a very close knit group of employees to “a group of strangers working together,” according to William Hutto, executive director of Link. Hutto saw a need to work together more efficiently, with staff recognizing one another as each other's customer. He believed this would lead to a more professional work

environment, ultimately affecting how each person interacted with clients.

Training on customer-driven service using the resources in the National RTAP program was provided to Link employees by Noel as a pilot for a possible state-wide program of training on customer service. The response from employees to the training has been very positive; supervisors are now working with their employees to reinforce customer service. Suggestions boxes, open-door policies, and an emphasis on more respectful interactions all are actions that have been implemented since the training.

Noel emphasizes that the key to getting the most out of the Customer-Driven Service resources is to apply them to all parts of an agency, with the whole team putting in the effort. Hutto echoes this sentiment; “It must be a part of management's philosophy and it must be ‘lived out’ each day. Management must set the examples, set the expectations, and accept nothing less.” Link's mission and vision statement both include customer service as a key element.

### **The benefits aren't just for the customer**

Customer service is more than just making customers happy. If everyone makes an effort to create a caring and helpful environment, employee morale will increase. The workplace can be a fun environment where people enjoy working and a place where they feel they matter. For the agency as a whole, satisfied customers translate to happier employees, increased revenue, a return on investment, and a solid agency reputation. “Customer service cannot be a one-time deal... It's a work in progress, but we are seeing positive change,” says Hutto.

### **Customer-Driven Service resources**

- To order a copy of National RTAP's Customer-Driven Service **Module**, go to their website: <http://nationalrtap.org>.
- A recording of the **Webinar** from July 22 is also available at the National RTAP website. Click on the National RTAP Webinar button.
- For a PDF Version of the **Learner's Guide**, go to <http://www.nationalrtap.org/FeatureDetails.aspx?id=438&org=a2GSpnDbruI=>
- **TriCounty Link's Mission and Vision Statement** is available at <http://www.ksrtap.org> under “Resources to Download,” or order a hard copy on page 15.

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# Are You Ready for a Transit Rodeo in Your Region?

By Anne Lowder

This past summer I was a volunteer judge at a Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Rodeo for a “passenger stop” competition. It was a long, hot day but a great learning experience. I learned that there are *great* drivers... and then there are drivers. The great drivers demonstrated skills in smooth parallel parking, precision backing and excellent customer service. Although the top drivers receive recognition for their driving skills, winning is not the primary reason for the competition. The rodeo is an opportunity for drivers to test their own limits and to meet others in their profession.

The Community Transportation Association Rodeo was held in Indianapolis, Indiana this past June. Transit operators across the nation (including Hawaii) came prepared to showcase their skills in handling a bus. The drivers competed for top scores in four areas, described below.

## Rodeo competition components

1) **Written test.** The written test has 25 questions that are either multiple choice or short answer. Drivers are asked questions about basic transit driver activities such as defensive driving skills, emergency preparedness and passenger assistance.

2) **Pre-trip inspection.** The pre-trip inspection has a time limit of minutes. The exercise sets up four pre-set safety defects on the vehicle that the driver is asked to identify. Points are given if the pre-trip inspection is conducted in a logical manner (i.e., moving from the front of the vehicle to the back of the vehicle, left to right, or top to bottom) and if the inspection is completed within the time limit.

3) **Driving course.** The driving course has a time limit of 7 minutes. Seat belts are required for the driver and on-board



*Your drivers won't have to wear fancy duds or use lariats for a transit rodeo, but they will be demonstrating their skills and competing with peers as they learn from each other.*

judges; penalty points are assessed for not verifying restraint use. Use of turn signals is required on the course and points are deducted for improper use of turn signals. The driver is also judged on smoothness of operation (i.e. no sudden starts, stops or abrupt turns).

The individual driving exercise is broken into nine obstacles: 1) offset street, 2) right and left hand reverse, 3) right turn, 4) passenger stop, 5) left turn, 6) serpentine, 7) right tire clearance, 8) diminishing clearance and 9) judgment stop. Each obstacle has a unique set of judging criteria. For example the serpentine obstacle is worth 50 points. Ten points are deducted for each cone touched, 5 points deducted for each transmission shift into reverse and 25 points deducted for touching a pivot cone. The complete course can be viewed

at: [http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Rodeo\\_Guide\\_2011.pdf](http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/articlefiles/Rodeo_Guide_2011.pdf)

4) **Wheelchair securement.** Wheelchair securement has a time limit. The exercise is stopped after 7 minutes and scored on performance to that point. The contestant's time starts upon meeting the judge and the passenger. The contestant must demonstrate good customer service skills as well as securement technique. The judging consists of point values for “verbal” and point values for “performance.”

For example, the contestant must ask the passenger if he has all of his belongings, not merely look around the area. The contestant must say he or she is checking the handgrips on the wheelchair, and physically try to twist them. The contestant must say to the passenger that he or she is going to back the passenger onto the lift. Contestants do not have to memorize a specific statement, but must tell the passenger what they are going to do before they do it.

After loading the passenger in the vehicle, the contestant must secure the wheelchair and passenger. After the contestant has positioned the wheelchair in the securement area, secured the front and rear tie-downs, set the wheel locks and secured the lap/belt/ shoulder harness, the time stops. The judge will release the wheel locks and check that the wheelchair does not roll or slide in either direction. If the chair rolls by any amount the contestant will not receive any points.

## Why have a rodeo?

I asked the question: “Why have a rodeo?” of agencies and organizations around the country such as Wyoming Transit, Indiana's Access Johnson County Transit, and Ride Solution. The number *continued on next page*

## Transit roadeo *Continued from page 9*

one reason they gave is that agencies typically do very little to show drivers appreciation for what they do. The roadeo is that day for the driver.

Agencies also reported that the roadeo competition is important because it inspires transit operators to become better drivers. Excellent performance during the competition is learned through day-to-day experience in driving safely. The roadeo is the place for drivers (whether local, state, regional or national) to meet and learn safety skills from other drivers.

Roadeos can also be a source of identifying improvement needs within the profession by looking at the aggregate scores of the drivers. An example of the roadeo identifying an improvement need occurred at a previous CTAA's National Transit Roadeo. The overall roadeo scores showed a weakness in pre-trip inspections. In response, CTAA developed recommended best practices for the pre-trip inspection form and that information was given to drivers at subsequent competitions to take back to their respective agencies.

Testimonials from drivers at the roadeo spoke of the motivation to work extra-hard to maintain a safe driving record in order to compete and that competing helped with morale. Becky Guthrie, manager from Ride Solution, spoke about the morale of the agency as well. She notes that "having a driver place at a state or national roadeo reflects well on your agency's training and safety."

### **The challenges of the roadeo**

Agencies may be concerned about holding a roadeo or sending participants to a roadeo because of the expense. In

*A roadeo is one way to give drivers "their day" and show support and appreciation for what they do.*

fact Wyoming Transit closed their roadeo these last two years due to that concern, according to Jamie Hunolt, WYTRANS Administrative Consultant. Interestingly, WYTRANS is looking to bringing the roadeo competition back in spite of expenses as an important component of mandatory training and driver morale. WYTRANS assembled a board which is currently preparing a roadeo proposal. The competition encourages drivers to become competent in overall knowledge of transit (the written test), driving skills and customer service skills (wheelchair securement test).

The roadeo can be an effective part of an agency's training process but how do you make a roadeo happen? Becky Allen, Access Johnson County, Indiana, says it takes more than one person. It takes a planning committee of transit professionals to develop the written test, scoring standards, choose a site and secure vehicles for the event and other various activities. That committee might be made up of individuals from one agency, from representatives from several agencies in a region that would like to hold a roadeo or, as it is often done in other states, by a sub-committee of the state transit association.

Ideas to help with expenses include looking for local businesses to sponsor the event. Local businesses can donate prizes, food and beverages and volunteers.

Consider the roadeo as a marketing strategy by forming the event around promoting the awareness of safe driving. Organizing the training with other community events and allowing people within the community to participate as volunteers. This will give the volunteers the chance to become aware of the challenges of being a safe transit operator as well as an opportunity for the driver to be recognized by the community.

Other expenses, for example in states such as Indiana, Wyoming and New Jersey, are covered by the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP). RTAP pays some expenses for the state event and also covers the cost for the first and second place winners to attend the national competition.

### **It's all about the drivers**

The bottom line is that the roadeo is all about the drivers. It motivates drivers to understand their role in transit operations. It encourages drivers to improve their customer service skills and it promotes proper and safe driving techniques. The three skills to test and improve with a transit roadeo, as defined by CTAA, are transit knowledge, customer service and safe driving. These are the same service goals often seen in agency mission statements.

Kansas was not represented at this year's national transit roadeo. I believe that this should be a goal of Kansas transit. Can a roadeo be hard work to put together? Can a roadeo have expenses? Yes and yes. The hard work and expense of a roadeo pays off in improved driver morale and motivation to carry out the mission statement of the agency—safety and customer service. And that's priceless. ●

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# Documenting Injuries and Crashes — and How to Avoid Them When You Can

By Matthew Barnett

Crashes take place for a variety of reasons. Some end with a screech and a crunch, and some others just a little scrape. After a crash, the first thing to do is to check to see if everyone is okay, but immediately after that, the blame game ensues. Who's at fault? That can be a tough question. For agencies, it's worthwhile to not only train your employees about preventable crashes, but how to prepare an investigative report after each incident. After crashes, problems such as liability come into play. Agencies should avoid the possibility of a lawsuit, because let's face it, even if no one was hurt in the crash and you win the case, it still consumes a lot of time and money.

A preventable crash is any crash in which the driver failed to do everything reasonably possible to avoid it. According to the West Virginia Department of Transportation, in most circumstances, crashes are preventable. Defensive driving and training are some of the ways to help re-enforce crash prevention with your drivers. If a crash does occur, your agency may want to determine whether a crash was preventable or not. An appropriate way to go about determining this is to conduct a crash investigation after all the facts have been gathered.

Many different types of crashes can occur with transit vehicles: rear-ending another vehicle, backing into a vehicle, colliding with pedestrians, pulling out from a curb, passing errors, hitting fixed objects, passenger crashes and others. Generally a crash can be summed up as being anytime any part of the vehicle comes into contact with another object, except for the wheels touching the ground.

One of the best ways to determine preventability is to ask questions about the crash. For example, if one of your vehicles was involved in an intersection crash, one of the questions could be:



It is your agency's responsibility to conduct an investigation when a crash occurs. It is also your responsibility to conduct training in defensive driving so that each of your operators is trained in how to avoid preventable crashes, and react accordingly if one does occur. Liability is always a concern, so inside

every vehicle there should be a crash reporting packet. The reporting packet will serve guide your driver through the documentation process to ensure the collection of the following basic data is collected completely and accurately:

- Law enforcement officer's badge number and name
- Names of hospital or medical personnel involved
- Names of the owner(s) of the vehicle(s) involved
- Name(s) of the operator(s) of the vehicle(s) involved, if different than owner(s)
- Time and location of crash
- Names and contact information for injured parties (bodily injury)
- Any non-vehicle property damage
- Names and contact information from witnesses
- Crash description

Did our driver obey all traffic signs and signals? If it was raining: Did our driver approach the intersection at a speed safe for the conditions? Make a list of questions that pertain to the circumstances of the crash.

Was the crash a backing crash? If so, was it necessary for your driver to back up? What is your agency's policy on backing? Did he or she do a "walk around" prior to backing up? Was there an audible warning that the vehicle was backing up?

If a crash involved skidding: Was the operator driving at a safe speed for the conditions? Was the driver keeping additional following distance over what would be used for dry pavement conditions? If the answer is "no" to these questions, your operator was not driving as defensively as possible.

Another concern for your agency should be alcohol and drug testing requirements after transit vehicle crashes. If you are an agency receiving

Section 5311 funding, there are several requirements for post-crash drug and alcohol testing. Be sure to consult your post-accident testing policy. Contact your state drug and alcohol coordinator and/or your third-party administrator for drug and alcohol testing to update any checklists in case of a crash or if you have any specific questions. In Kansas contact Scott Lein at KDOT (785) 368-7091 or slein@ksdot.org.

Here are some examples of incidents that should be reported and most likely were preventable:

- A passenger trips while boarding the vehicle and bumps his knee. He indicates to the driver that he is okay and needs no further attention. (This could still have potential liability consequences if the passenger's condition changes.)
- A passenger in a wheelchair tips over on the vehicle while the vehicle is in motion.

*continued on next page*

## Crashes *Continued from page 11*

- A transit vehicle strikes a mailbox or other fixed object.
- A transit vehicle backs into a pedestrian.
- A transit vehicle crashes into another vehicle.
- A bicycle rider collides with a transit vehicle.

There are many steps to take to properly handle crash response and documentation for your agency. Training employees to understand policy, procedures and the difference between preventable and non-preventable accidents will better prepare your agency for when crashes occur. For more information on bus safety, check out the Federal Transit Authority's website at <http://www.fta.dot.gov>, and click on the Safety & Security link.

Procedures for what to do when a crash happens may be different for each individual agency. The following are some general guidelines from West Virginia's Department of Transportation. When a crash happens, stop and:

- Assess the situation.
- Make an evacuation/no evacuation decision for your transit vehicle.
- Evacuate if necessary.
- Aid the injured.
- If there is a two-way radio and it is still functional, radio the dispatcher with vehicle location, otherwise phone the police and the dispatcher or manager.
- Obtain the name, address and badge number of the investigation police officer.
- Obtain facts about the other vehicle(s).
- Obtain facts about other person(s).
- Obtain facts about other property damaged.
- Look for suspicious activity on the part of the other driver.
- Locate any witnesses. Pass out courtesy cards and collect them upon completion.
- Describe and diagram the crash.
- If the crash is serious, notify your management of the seriousness and have them contact the nearest claims office or claims representative.
- Do not discuss the crash with anyone except with the police, representative from the claims agent, or the supervisor on duty; and
- Do not make any statement concerning the assumption of liability. Give out only the information required by authorities. Do not sign any statement except those from an authorized transit system representative.

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## TECHNOLOGY

# Tips for Using RTAP's New Website Builder

By Nora Fairchild

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program's **RTAP in the Cloud** is a website building service created specifically for transit organizations. The service is free and provides assistance so that any transit agency can create a website for their staff and customers that provides information on transit routes and schedules. This article will show you how to navigate the website building service.

Before getting to the specifics, we will define the "cloud." RTAP in the Cloud is not just a catchy name—it refers to Cloud

Computing, which is defined as a server in which information is stored remotely with an online service rather than on your own storage device. The National RTAP website takes its definition from Wikipedia: "Cloud Computing describes computation, software, data access, and storage services that do not require end-user knowledge of the physical location and configuration of the system that delivers its services." Sounds confusing? Knowing some concerns about Cloud Computing may help to clarify the concept.

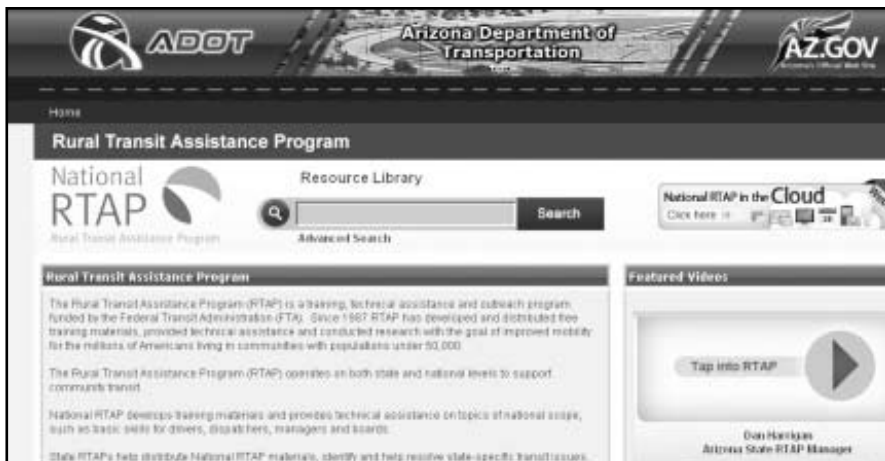
Some risks associated with any Cloud Computing system include vulnerability to hacks; that is, other people viewing or tampering with your information stored in the Cloud, and the chance of information loss since the data is stored remotely and you don't have physical control of the storage device(s).

During an interview, Frank Condon, Director of Technology at National RTAP, said that approximately 50 transit agencies are creating websites using the RTAP Cloud and that so far five or so have



Richland County, Virginia

**Above and below**, are examples of webpages produced using RTAP in the Cloud.



Arizona DOT

their sites up and running. He said that there has been a good response from agencies to RTAP in the Cloud and they appreciate the fact that they save money by using the tool. They also like that they can change the look and feel of their sites and add content with the many web application tools available with the tool such as Procurement Pro, Resource Library and GTFB Builder.

Two examples of agencies with

websites built with RTAP in the Cloud are the Arizona DOT Transit Assistance Program and the Richland County Transportation Service. Sample pages from these websites are shown above.

#### How to create your page

This part is easy. Just create a login name and sign up with your organization's existing account or set up a new one. The further you get into the

website building process, however, the more difficult it becomes.

#### Making changes to your website

Pay attention to the confirmation email you will receive after sign up—this will be your guide for getting started.

One thing you need to learn to navigate the website builder successfully is a group of basic terms. These include: skin, pages, modules, panes, containers and content. These terms are surely familiar in other contexts, but they have different meanings here than you may be used to.

Common changes you might make to your website are fairly easy to do. The website builder gives you a basic stand-alone template to start with, so at the bare minimum you could simply edit the text and add your own information. To edit text, make sure that the bar at the top of your page is in edit mode (on the far left), then hover over the text you would like to change and click the pencil icon. This allows you to add and delete text, as well as make basic modifications such as changing the font, alignment, format and links. Don't forget to hit the save icon on the far left of the text bar!

If you would like to move a module (element), for example move a video from the bottom left of your page to the upper right or middle, this is a bit more complex than editing text. You would really only need to move a module if you want to veer from the template included with the website builder. More information on moving modules is available at the RTAP in the Cloud Support Center.

An even more advanced aspect of National RTAP's In the Cloud is Skinlab, which allows you to change the photos and colors on your site and make it look customized. With this feature you can also make your site easier to use for your  
*continued on next page*

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## How To Reach Us

For a free subscription to the *Kansas TransReporter* or to contact one of our faculty or staff, call toll-free (800) 248-0350 (in Kansas) or (785) 864-2595 (outside Kansas). Send correspondence to:

**Kansas TransReporter  
Kansas University Transportation Center  
1530 W. 15th Street, Room 2160  
Lawrence, KS 66045**

Send e-mail messages to Pat Weaver at [weaver@ku.edu](mailto:weaver@ku.edu) or Lisa Harris at [LHarris@ku.edu](mailto:LHarris@ku.edu). Visit our website at <http://www.ksrtap.org>

## Kansas RTAP Staff

Assistance can be obtained by contacting a *Kansas TransReporter* staff person at the numbers or address above.

Project Director ..... Pat Weaver  
Editor ..... Lisa Harris  
Contributors ..... Anne Lowder,  
Nate Vander Broek, Nora Fairchild,  
Matthew Barnett

## Other Services

In addition to publishing the *Kansas TransReporter*, Kansas RTAP offers a variety of other educational services. Following is a partial list of these services:

- Publication dissemination
- Program planning assistance
- Technical assistance
- Video lending library
- Telephone consultation
- Computer database searches
- Training development
- Referral services
- Website
- E-mail discussion group

## RTAP In the Cloud *Continued from page 13*

employees and customers.

Does creating and editing a website still seem a little daunting? Luckily, the National RTAP provides plenty of resources to help you create a working and professional-looking website. I went online to check a few of these resources out for myself.

### RTAP in the Cloud's troubleshooting and support resources

RTAP in the Cloud has a link at which you can find the following resources to help you in the process of building or updating your website: <http://nrtap.zendesk.com/home>.

**Online video webinars.** For me, the video tutorials were the most time-consuming to use but also the most helpful way to learn how to use the website builder. The videos are a great primer to the website building tool as a whole. You can choose to watch the basic video to get an idea of the tools and options at your disposal and, like I did, watch the advanced tutorial to get an in-depth understanding of some of the more advanced techniques and features.

**Online manual.** If you learn best by reading, the online manual can help you catch up on what you missed during the videos. Or, when you have a specific problem with your header or some other element, you can simply access the online manual to find a quick solution. The manual provides the same step-by-step help that you can get from the videos, but also allows you to scan through information you already know and get to what matters in the moment. The online manual also makes it easier to review step-by-step actions for changing your website that you may not have caught while listening to the video.

**Access to support staff who can help.** Both a call center and online chat technicians are available to help you with your website. Not only that, but the video tutorial host, Frank Condon, is easy to contact directly. His contact information is:

Frank Condon  
Director of Technology  
National Rural Transit Assistance Program  
(888) 589-6821  
[fcondon@nationalrtap.org](mailto:fcondon@nationalrtap.org)

### Conclusion

This may be a project for an agency staff member or volunteer who has either ample time or website building experience, but it doesn't need to be. Condon said that you can fit the project to your time-frame and level of expertise by choosing to have less content on the site, and fewer pages. It also helps to have the content that you would like included in your website, like a schedule, already saved in a word document.

If you are thinking about creating or improving your agency website, give RTAP in the Cloud a try! It is specifically designed for transit agencies and for ease of use and development.

If you would like to create a website for your agency, create a Cloud account at:  
<http://www.nationalrtap.org>

To view the sample template for a website, go to:  
<http://www.nationalrtap.org/test55a/Home.aspx>

*The combination of online webinars, a how-to manual, a call center, online chat technicians and access to the tutorial trainer give transit agencies a healthy package of support options to make using the tool less daunting.*

## Transit Resources

**2009 Traffic Safety Facts Annual Report, early edition.** National Highway, Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has released a safety fact report. This report is customarily not available until later. Instead of withholding the entire report until all data are in, this early edition is produced to allow customers access to statistics that are currently available. 232 pages. 2011. <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811402EE.pdf>

**Kansas New Road Laws.** Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP). Kansas laws are amended each year during the Legislative Session, and often the changes pertain to traffic safety. Many of the changes affect the motoring public. Download at [http://www.kansashighwaypatrol.org/general/road\\_laws.html](http://www.kansashighwaypatrol.org/general/road_laws.html) or check here \_\_\_\_ for a hard copy.

**Kansas Driver's License Status Check.** Interested in the status of your driver's license? Check out the Kansas Highway Patrol (KHP) website. <https://www.kdor.org/DLStatus/login.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2fdlstatus%2fsecure%2fdefault.aspx>

**Transit Safety Management and Performance Measurement - Volume 1: Guidebook.** This guidebook, prepared by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides resource information for transit agencies about the development and implementation of Safety Management Systems (SMS) and Safety Performance Measurement Systems (SPMS). SMS offer the most promising means of preventing public transportation accidents by integrating safety into all aspects of a transit system's activities, from planning to design to construction to operations to maintenance. 133 pages. 2011. <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/Safety/Default.aspx>

**Federal Transit Administration (FTA): Technical Assistance – Questions asked during an FTA Drug and Alcohol Compliance Audit.** August 2011. <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/DrugAndAlcohol/TechnicalAssistance/AuditQuestions/default.aspx>

Easter Seals Project Action has released three publications in Spanish. **The ESPA Pocket Guide**, the **ADA Customer Rights & Responsibilities Bookmark**, and the **ADA Paratransit Customer Rights & Responsibilities Bookmark**. The pocket guide is the general brochure with information about the ESPA mission, technical assistance and training offerings, and outreach. Both bookmarks include quick tips on their respective topics. 2011. [http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA\\_homepage](http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=ESPA_homepage)

**Tri-County Link (South Carolina) Mission and Vision Statements.** 1 page. Download at <http://www.ksrtap.org> under "Resources to Download," or check here \_\_\_\_ for a hard copy.

### ORDER FORM

A few of the above resources are available in hard copy for readers who do not have internet access. Check the items you would like to receive and fill out the form below. Fax to (785) 864-3199.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip+4 \_\_\_\_\_

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**Is your mailing information correct?** Send any changes to (785) 864-3199 (fax).



The *Kansas TransReporter* is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the Kansas University Transportation Center (KUTC), under the umbrella of KU's Transportation Research Institute. The newsletter is free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The *Kansas TransReporter* is co-sponsored by the Federal

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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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## Calendar

### Rural Transit Training and Conferences — Fall 2011

**American Public Transportation Association Annual Meeting & EXPO**

October 2-5, 2011 in New Orleans, LA.  
To register, visit <http://www.apta.com/mc/annual/Pages/default.aspx>.

**Defensive Driving and Emergency Response\*\***

October 4 in Garden City  
October 5 in Great Bend  
October 12 in Atchison  
October 13 in Manhattan  
October 20 in Olathe  
November 16 in McPherson

**National Association of Development Organizations Annual Training Conference:**

October 8-11 in Miami, Florida  
Register at [http://www.nado.org/conferences/annual.php?con\\_id=139&content=con\\_overview](http://www.nado.org/conferences/annual.php?con_id=139&content=con_overview)

**Public Involvement in the Transportation Planning Process – Webinar**

October 12, 2011. [http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/Calendar?view=Detail&id=35978&auto\\_login=true](http://projectaction.easterseals.com/site/Calendar?view=Detail&id=35978&auto_login=true)

**National Transit Institute (NTI) Risk Assessment for Transit Capital Projects**

October 12-13 in Los Angeles, California. Register at <http://www.ntionline.com/courses/courseinfo.php?id=19>

**National Transit Institute Rural Reporting – Webinar**

October 19 or November 3  
Register at <http://www.ntionline.com/courses/courseinfo.php?id=212>

**National Transit Institute Safety and Security Reporting - Basic Setup/Minor Incident Reporting – Webinar**

October 25, 2011, February 21, 2012 or June 26, 2012. Register at <http://www.ntionline.com/courses/courseinfo.php?id=198>

**Defensive Driving and Passenger Assistance Skills\*\***

October 26 in Ottawa

**14th Annual National Tribal Transportation Conference**

November 14-17 in Nashville, Tennessee.  
Register at <http://www.ttap.colostate.edu/newsevent.aspx?id=133>

**Advanced Mobility Securement\*\***

November 15 in Oakley

**2012 Training / Technical Assistance Conference and Roadshow**

March 18-21, 2012 in Scottsdale, AZ  
<http://nationalrtap.org/conference2012.aspx>

*\*\*To register for a Kansas RTAP workshop, go to <http://www.kstap.org>. Click on "Register to attend." Questions? Contact Kristin Kelly at (785) 864-2594 or [kbkelly@ku.edu](mailto:kbkelly@ku.edu).*