Tackling the Challenge of Rural Community Engagement
By Caitlin Zibers

The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: No one is against it in principle because it is good for you,” said community engagement expert Sherry Arnstein. While you may agree on its usefulness and value, in practice, engaging the community in transit improvement can be a bit hard to swallow. Not every citizen has a positive view of public engagement, or wants to engage in giving feedback. Every year there seem to be new checklists, technology and studies on how to best engage the public; all of which have value but can be perhaps overwhelming. To help you narrow down the options for engaging your citizens, this article will highlight the key challenges in rural community engagement. Once you know what challenges to be mindful of, you can focus on developing a community outreach effort that makes sense for your area.

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RTAP Director Pat Weaver Honored at Retirement
By Lisa Harris

The Transportation Center marked an important occasion recently with a celebration of the career and retirement of Patricia (Pat) Weaver. Pat was Executive Director of the Center and a Research Scientist at the Kansas University Transportation Center where she has worked since 1982. Pat was director of the Kansas Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) as well as the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP). With RTAP she worked extensively with rural and small urban transit systems and has conducted research in the area of transit demand analysis and system planning.

Pat’s primary responsibilities at the University of Kansas included research, training and technical assistance to rural programs. Pat managed a number of projects funded by the Federal Transit Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, State DOTs, and local governments. She has provided

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consulting services to other states and transit operators around the country.

Pat was (and still is) very active at the national level, especially in transit. She completed a term as Chair of the National RTAP Review Board; is a member of the Transportation Research Board, chair of the TRB Committee on Rural and Intercity Bus Transportation (AP055) and has served on the planning committee for several National Conferences on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. She’s a member of the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee and has served on a number of panels with the Transit Cooperative Research Program. She is a member of the Advisory Board of the National Transit Institute, and is a member of numerous other professional associations.

Pat received numerous awards, including the:
• **CTAA Founder’s Award** from the Community Transportation Association of America in 2013
• **Roger Tate Award** from the TRB Committee on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in 2008 for dedicated service, outstanding accomplishment and lasting contribution to rural mobility,
• **Willie M. Murray Award** from the Kansas Public Transit Association in 2003 for her outstanding and dedicated long-term service on behalf of Kansas Public Transportation, and
• **Federal Transit Administration Region VII Award** in 2012 in recognition of 25 years of exemplary service to the Rural Transportation Assistance Program and the promotion of rural public transportation.

Pat was instrumental in launching the Kansas Roads Scholar Program in 2000 with the Kansas County Highway Association, and with KDOT and the Kansas Association of Counties as partners. The Kansas Chapter of APWA was added as a partner in 2014.

If you know Pat, you know she will stay active in her retirement. Besides looking forward to spending more time with her family—and on her bicycle—Pat will continue to promote bicycling and transit. She has been certified by the League of American Bicyclists to teach Smart Cycling classes to children as well as adults. The goal is to help people feel more secure about getting on a bike, to create a mind-set that bikes are treated as a vehicle, and to ensure that people on bikes know how to ride safely and legally.

Pat has been an inspiring leader and mentor to her staff and graduate research assistants as well as a caring and encouraging supervisor. We’ll miss you, Pat! Congratulations on a retirement well earned.

[Note: Lisa Harris is now the Director for LTAP and RTAP and is Interim Director of the KU Transportation Center. Special thanks to Kristin Kelly for planning the retirement event.]
Common challenges in rural community engagement

*Distance and barriers.* Community engagement in rural areas can be a challenge because of the sheer space that many communities occupy. More and more rural transit agencies are working on a regional level, connecting several communities. This affects not only their operational logistics but also relationships with a wider public. Agencies looking to cover a region can struggle to unite people across city and county borders. Even within the same locale, engaging both the farming/rural residents and in-town dwellers can be a challenge. Finding meeting times and locations that satisfy a good cross-section of the public can be difficult because of the wide variety of lifestyles in rural areas.

*New voices vs. (same) old voices.* In some rural areas, residents without long-time roots can find it difficult to plug into the community, especially if they work outside the community. On the flip side, long-time residents can become jaded in their participation, especially if they are typically the only people who participate or if their expectations are not often met. The history of public participation in your area is key to understanding how to engage these different voices in your outreach efforts. Knowing the most active members and also the absent parties will help you tailor your efforts to reach the maximum numbers of people.

*Politics.* Political will can work against your efforts, especially if elected officials do not value community input. Even those officials who support your community engagement efforts may be looking to only include their constituents, and in some places that can mean that minority populations can be left out of the process if you are not intentional about their inclusion.

*Mistrust and expectations.* The public can grow to mistrust local government and agencies because of past failed community engagement efforts or failed expectations. Citizens can become discouraged after volunteering their time to give feedback if they cannot easily see the results. Violating expectations is a sure way to create and continue mistrust in your community.

How do you overcome these challenges? Here are some steps to consider:

**Build relationships**

Rural areas have an advantage in building relationships. In smaller towns or rural areas, the chance of your agency or the members of your agency having existing relationships with the public is higher than in urban areas because there are fewer people to reach. However, if your agency hasn’t built relationships out there, it is crucial that you make this your first step to any deeper community engagement effort. Why? Because [continued on next page]
people are willing to travel farther and participate more for people they know, trust and like. It also helps you gain a deeper understanding of the individuals who make up your community, what motivates them and where their interests lie. Building strong relationships can help you address the challenges mentioned earlier.

A newsletter or email list does not count as a substitute for tangible relationships. Get in front of the people you want to engage, face to face. At the beginning of your next outreach program or initiative, identify 10 agencies or individuals who would be beneficial to the success of your project and invite each to an informal one-on-one meeting to grab a coffee and talk. Don’t forget your local elected officials and city staff.

Tips for engaging people
Here are a few things to keep in mind to begin relationship building, from the University of Kansas Community Toolbox:
- Build relationships one at a time.
- Be genuine.
- Ask people questions and tell people about yourself; open up.
- Assume other people want to form relationships, too. It’s easy to convince yourself that the public isn’t interested in participating; don’t shut yourself down before trying.
- Be persistent; trust takes time and so do relationships.
- Personally invite people to get involved. Many people are happy and eager to serve something larger than themselves.
- Enjoy people. If that goes against your nature, find someone within your agency who enjoys getting to know people.

The idea behind building relationships is to open the door for dialogue, where people can be comfortable to agree or, more importantly, disagree and gain valuable input.

Educate and empower your public for action
The average citizen may know very little about the programs, initiatives and services your agency offers, so there is probably some amount of education that should go into your community engagement efforts. For some communities that could be as simple as publishing educational materials and distributing them. For others, you might consider creating a citizen academy.

A citizen academy is a useful tool in creating an engaged and educated public. For transit agencies, if you were interested in implementing a new fixed route service, you could form a citizen academy. The group would consist of the same people and meet each week for 7-8 weeks. During their meetings they would learn about the mechanics of a fixed route service and how that would impact the community. Activities allowing citizens to brainstorm, problem-solve and contribute can produce options your agency might not normally think about.

Citizen academies can include city staff and elected officials as well as diverse members of the public; in fact it may be a great opportunity for people to interact who normally might not.

Regardless of the technique you choose, include education in your community engagement efforts to create a more invested and knowledgeable public. This will help citizens understand the decisions made, as well as allow them to contribute valuable input.

Be clear, be concise, be trustworthy
Trust is crucial to public programs and initiatives. One way to secure the trust of the public is to set and manage expectations. For example, if you are interested in holding a public meeting ask yourself: What is our intent? Is a public meeting the best method, or would a workshop or survey work better? To help you identify your purpose, ask the following:
- Is the participation intended to generate ideas?
- Is it to identify attitudes?
- Is it to disseminate information?
- Is it to resolve some identified conflict?
- Is it to measure opinion?
- Is it to review a proposal?
- Or is it merely to serve as a safety valve for pent-up emotions?

Explaining exactly what you expect from participants and what they can expect from you will go a long way in setting the ground work for the meeting. As a citizen, nothing is more disappointing than volunteering time to give advice on a new service and never have it considered

References
Improve Your Communication Skills at Work

By Anne Lowder

On a cold winter day a transit driver left passengers cooling their heels on his bus for seven minutes when he went to a doughnut shop to use the bathroom and buy a drink. A rider videotaped that unscheduled employee break, which was posted on YouTube. As a supervisor, how would you communicate with your driver about this situation?

First, context matters. Was he a new, inexperienced driver, or was he a seasoned driver who didn't want to adhere to policy? Maybe the driver really needed that unscheduled bathroom break but didn't follow or wasn't aware of the correct procedures to take. Before you reprimand your driver, it is best to understand the scenario by using an interactive communication process.

Good communication helps you better understand a person or situation, enables you to resolve differences, builds trust and respect, and creates an environment where creative ideas and problem solving can flourish.

As simple as it seems, many people experience difficulties connecting successfully with others. Much of what you try to communicate (and others try to communicate to you) gets overlooked or misunderstood, which can cause conflict and frustration. The most important aspect of effective communication is the clarity of the message delivered.

Fortunately, effective communication skills can be learned, and this article will describe how.

Communication: What's in a message?

Effective communication is more than just exchanging information. Effective communication requires you to also understand the emotion behind the information. Good communication skills can improve relationships within your agency by improving teamwork, decision-making, empathy, and problem solving. These skills enable you to communicate even negative or difficult messages without creating conflict or destroying trust. Effective communication combines a set of skills including nonverbal communication, attentive listening, the ability to manage stress in the moment, and the capacity to recognize and understand your own emotions and those of the person with whom you're communicating. These are all valuable skills for you as a transit supervisor. You, your employees, and your agency are all likely to perform better, and your stress level will go down.

Of course, it takes time and effort to develop these skills and become an effective communicator. The more effort and practice you put in, the more instinctive and spontaneous your communication skills will become.

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Effective communication skills
1. Watch nonverbal communication. When you communicate things in person, you do so mainly using nonverbal signals. In fact, 95 percent of face-to-face communication is delivered through nonverbal cues like facial expressions, body movement and gestures, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, and even muscle tension and breathing. The way you look, listen, move, and react to another person tells him or her more about how you’re feeling and thinking than words alone ever can.

   Developing the ability to be aware of your own nonverbal behavior can help you express what you really mean, navigate challenging situations, and build better relationships at work.

   For example, as a supervisor, if you communicate in a distant manner, such as through email, or you call your drivers into your office and have them sit far away, this can be perceived negatively. It is like telling your employee that he or she is not important. People usually work better when they know they are part of the team. Visit drivers in their break area or other common area unless talking about something confidential.

   You can enhance your communication by using open body language such as arms uncrossed, standing with an open

Communication in the workplace Continued from page 5

It’s easy to read the thoughts of the young girl. It’s more difficult with the woman. Is she defensive, checked out, or just pensive? Don’t read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue, like folded arms.

Tips for Improving How to Read Nonverbal Communication

   • Practice observing people in public places, such as a shopping mall, bus, train, restaurant, or even on a television chat show with the sound muted. Observe how others use body language. This can teach you how to better receive and use nonverbal signals when conversing with others. Notice how people act and react to each other. Try to guess what their relationship is, what they’re talking about, and how each feels about what is being said.

   • Be aware of individual differences. People from different countries and cultures tend to use different nonverbal communication gestures, so it’s important to take age, culture, religion, gender, and emotional state into account when reading body language signals. A disabled veteran, a passenger with dementia, and a first-generation Asian senior, for example, are likely to use nonverbal signals differently.

   • Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group. Don’t read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all of the nonverbal signals you receive, from eye contact to tone of voice and body language. Anyone can slip up occasionally and let eye contact stray, for example, or briefly cross their arms without meaning to. Consider the signals as a whole to get a better “read” on a person.

Tips for Improving How to Deliver Nonverbal Communication

   • Use nonverbal signals that match up with your words. Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said, not contradict it. If you say one thing but your body language says something else, your listener will likely feel you’re being dishonest.

   • Adjust your nonverbal signals according to the context. The tone of your voice, for example, should be different when you’re addressing a child than when you’re addressing a group of adults. Similarly, take into account the emotional state and cultural background of the person you’re interacting with.

   • Use body language to convey positive feelings even when you’re not actually experiencing them. If you’re nervous about a situation—a job interview, important presentation, or first date, for example—you can use positive body language to signal confidence, even though you’re not feeling it. Instead of tentatively entering a room with your head down, eyes averted, and sliding into a chair, stand tall with your shoulders back, smile and maintain eye contact, and deliver a firm handshake. It will make you feel more self-confident and help to put the other person at ease.
stand or sitting on the edge of your seat, and maintaining eye contact with the person with whom you’re talking. You can also use body language to emphasize or enhance your verbal message. For example, shake the hand of your employee while complimenting him on his success. Provide those compliments in front of others when it’s appropriate to allow for shared recognition.

You can also help your drivers become better communicators. For example, you have a driver with a perfect driving record but people call in complaining about his “cold demeanor.” In discussing this situation with the driver, you learn that he says “Good morning,” but never looks at his passengers or smiles. Remind your driver about nonverbal communication and how people read emotion not only from his words and tone of voice, but also from his actions.

2. Give and seek feedback

Some of the most important data you can receive from others is feedback related to your behavior. Such feedback can act as a mirror for observing the consequences of your behavior. Such feedback helps make you more aware of what and how you communicate, thus increasing your ability to modify and change your behavior and to become more effective in your interactions.

When giving feedback to someone else, it is important to focus on behavior rather than the person (or what you imagine he or she is). Thus, you might say to your employee, “You did not complete a thorough pre-trip inspection on 8 occasions in the past 3 months,” rather than, “You are careless.” Focusing on specific behavior implies that it is related to a specific situation that might be changed. It is less threatening to a person to hear such comments.

Feedback should be provided within the context of a two-way conversation. As a supervisor you should provide guidance that your driver must follow but also allow for your driver to ask questions and understand why policies such as proper seat belt securement are to be enforced on the vehicle.

Finally, feedback is generally more meaningful if given as soon as appropriate after the observation or reactions occur, thus keeping it concrete and relatively free of distortions that come over time.

3. Listen

Listening is critically important to effective communication. Successful listening means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding how the speaker feels about what she or he is communicating.

Effective listening can make your employees feel heard and understood. As a supervisor it is important to create an environment where everyone feels safe to express ideas, opinions, and feelings, or plan and problem-solve in creative ways.

For example, a new driver comes to you for advice on how to deal with a problem passenger. You are familiar with this passenger and know how the situation should be handled. But you do not interrupt your driver, you let her conclude as you use active listening skills such as nodding your head or saying “uh huh.” You then ask leading questions such as, “Did you remain calm?” and “Do you see a better way to handle the situation?” Consequently, by actively listening and then engaging your driver in a conversation, you help her begin to learn how to engage and properly react to passengers.

As a supervisor, it is your goal to fully understand and connect with your employees. Like any skill, though, there is a learning curve. Remember to focus fully on the speaker, his or her body language, and other nonverbal cues. If you’re daydreaming, checking text messages, or doodling, you’re almost certain to miss nonverbal cues in the conversation, and convey to your employee that they are just not important.

Avoid interrupting or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns, such as saying, “If you think that’s bad, let me tell you what happened to me when I was driving and talking to that passenger.” Listening is not the same as waiting for your turn to talk. You can’t concentrate on what someone’s saying if you’re forming what you’re going to say next. Often, the speaker can read your facial expressions and know that your mind is elsewhere.

To communicate effectively with someone, you don’t have to like them or agree with their ideas, values, or opinions. However, you do need to set aside your judgment and withhold blame and criticism to better understand a person.

Show interest in what’s being said. Nod occasionally, smile at the person, and make sure your posture is open and inviting.

In sum

Effective communication has several aspects: understanding nonverbal clues (both yours and your employee’s), giving and seeking feedback that focuses on the person and the behavior, developing active listening skills, and managing stress and emotions.

How to have effective communication with your employees might seem obvious, but many supervisors struggle with it. The most important thing is the clarity of the message. Supervising by telepathy simply doesn’t work. It you want the buses cleaned at the end of each day, say so. This is not about being aggressive; it is about enabling someone to do the job required.

As a supervisor, you need to think carefully about what you want and the best way to do it. So above all else, remember that communication is vital and it needs to be constantly honed. Be conscious of what you communicate and how it is done. A failure in communication will result in a failure of performance. And what transit agency can afford that?

Source

Lawrence Transit recently held a storytelling contest to celebrate its 15-year anniversary. Riders were asked to submit their personal stories detailing their experiences using the transit system for the chance to win free fare. Lawrence Transit received 40 stories in all, showing the variety among riders using the system. The contest was both a celebration of the system as well as a way for the riders to engage with system administrators, using storytelling as a way to express what the transit system means to them.

**Highlighted stories**

**Jacob Horton.** This 15-year old high school student took first place with his story, highlighting how he was able to navigate Lawrence using the bus. While he was an occasional rider from an early age, it wasn’t until sixth grade that he became a regular rider. He lives too close to his school to be eligible to ride the school bus, so he has turned to the city transit system to get to school, extracurricular activities and errands around town. Along the way he has made new friends and gained confidence in his independence.

**Johnny Lyons.** Johnny Lyons took second place for his affectionate and quirky salute to the Lawrence Transit system, specifically his bus, “The Five.” Johnny rides the bus for his daily commute to work, using the time to people-watch and socialize. He takes particular note of the variety of riders: students from a dozen different countries, nervous newcomers, seasoned riders, the knitting women, book readers, and window gazers. He uses his experiences and observations to fuel his writing, a hobby that he pursues on the weekends, and describes the Lawrence Transit system as a “kaleidoscope of faces and people.”

**Billy Baker.** Billy’s story was written by his cousin, Amanda, and won him third place. Billy uses the transit system every day to get to his job at Cottonwood, a non-profit agency whose mission is to help people with disabilities shape their own future. Billy’s developmental disabilities have limited his transportation options, and his grandparents who care for him rely on the transit system to safely get him from their house to Cottonwood and back every day. Amanda emphasized that the transit system has helped ease his grandmother’s mind, knowing that the drivers are always patient and kind with Billy. Without access to the transit system Billy would not be as connected to, and supported by, the Cottonwood community.

**Mai Bui.** Mai’s story highlighted how Lawrence transit was able to help her integrate into a new community. Mai had recently left her home-country of Vietnam and moved to Lawrence with her husband, full of excitement. However, she soon realized that with limited English skills and work experience, the chance of finding a job was nearly impossible. She felt trapped in her small apartment with nowhere to go and nothing to do, isolated and lonely. After a month in Lawrence she rode the bus with her husband, and...
she had such a positive experience with the friendly driver and riders, she began to feel comfortable riding on her own. She has since branched out and now uses the bus to get around town and visit her conversation practice partner. She said the transit system helps her feel at home in Lawrence; that she is no longer a guest in Lawrence, but a resident.

Using storytelling for the agency

Many transit agencies use testimonials from their riders in marketing; however, testimonials are generally short comments or opinions. Lawrence Transit wanted to do something bigger for their 15th anniversary, which is what led them to hold a story-telling contest. The goal was to show the public why riders use the bus, where they go, and their opinions of the service. The city posted the winning stories on social media.

Each post received about 100 clicks to the city website via the link posted on Facebook or Twitter, said Bob Nugent, general manager of Lawrence Transit. Overall the city was pleased with the outcome, as it not only elevated the system’s image, but also reinforced the community’s need for transit service. Personalized, heart-warming stories that illustrated the reasons for service help communicate the need for transit service to those who don’t normally ride and may question why the service is needed, Nugent said.

By creating a platform for riders to share their stories, Lawrence Transit received customer feedback, positive marketing, increased traffic to the city website, and reinforced why the community needs this service—all for a relatively low cost. As a bonus, once the contest ended, they were left with a treasure trove of rider stories they plan on highlighting in the future, Nugent said.

Conclusion

Some communities find it difficult to create and maintain support for transit systems, especially with citizens who do not rely on the service. Lawrence has found success “telling their story” with a unique approach through rider storytelling. To our knowledge no other communities have done this. Engaging with your riders can be incredibly beneficial and relatively easy. Foregoing testimonials for longer, more detailed stories can offer riders the opportunity to speak publicly, and in detail, to the importance of the system. Storytelling is also a fun and engaging way to give your system a voice.

References


Save the Date for This Year’s Roadeo

Last fall, Kansas had its first Transit Bus Roadeo. It was a great success, and it’s back again this year—planned for Sunday, September 25, in Lawrence, Kansas. The Roadeo competition showcases good driving and customer service skills, and drivers have the opportunity to meet and learn from others. Prizes are awarded to the top three winners.

The vehicles used in the competition are 20-passenger, body-on-chassis, and wheelchair lift-equipped. Drivers are scored on navigating through an obstacle course of road cones within a time limit, testing various driving scenarios such as smooth parallel parking and precision backing. Drivers are also scored on pre-trip inspection and excellent customer service during wheelchair securement.

Look for more information in the July issue of the Kansas TransReporter or at http://www.ksrtap.org. Let your drivers show their stuff!
What To Do if a Passenger Has a Seizure on Your Vehicle

By Anne Lowder

There is a chance your transit driver will transport someone who has epilepsy, a seizure disorder. How would you want your driver to handle the situation if this rider had a seizure while en route? This article provides tips for drivers in responding to someone having a seizure on a bus—tips that would be good to add to your policy set or driver guidelines.

Epilepsy is more common than you may think. According to the Cure Epilepsy Research Organization, one in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy due to result of strokes, brain tumors, Alzheimer’s and incidents resulting in traumatic brain injury. An estimated three million Americans currently live with epilepsy and 200,000 people are diagnosed with epilepsy each year. In two-thirds of the cases the cause is unknown.

Types of epileptic seizures

There are two main types of epileptic seizures: generalized and focal. Not all seizures are immediately noticeable.

A generalized seizure affects both sides of the brain, and symptoms vary. In this situation a person could have an absence seizure, sometimes called a petit mal seizure, where they just stare at something or blink rapidly. Or a person could have a tonic-clonic seizure or “grand mal” seizure where they may cry out, lose consciousness and fall to the ground and shake.

The second type of seizure is the focal seizure. A focal seizure affects a small part of the brain. There are three focal seizure types. A simple focal seizure causes twitching or changes in sensation. A complex focal seizure can make a person unable to respond to questions or direction. A secondary generalized seizure is where the person starts with a focal seizure that then turns into a generalized seizure.

Quick flashes of light may set off a seizure; for example, flashes of sunlight through branches in a treed area.

Non-epileptic seizures

A seizure does not necessarily mean epilepsy. Other medical problems can cause a seizure, such as a high fever, low blood sugar, and alcohol or drug withdrawal.

Advice for drivers

Seizures vary widely in intensity, and not all are emergencies. Here are some tips for driver response to a seizure from the Centers for Disease Control, Easter Seals Project Action, and Tri-Board Student Transportation Services.

First, remain calm—it will be helpful to you, the person experiencing the seizure, and any others on the bus. In a practical way, your own tranquility and realistic acceptance of epilepsy will help others to overcome their uneasy feelings about seizures. Note that, in most cases, a person going through a seizure is aware of what people around them are saying.

Most seizures will last only 3 to 7 minutes. It may seem longer. If a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes or if the person gets injured during the seizure, call 911 or dispatch as per your agency’s policy. Also call 911 if the person has never had a seizure before, is having difficulty breathing or waking after the seizure, or has started a second seizure shortly after the first seizure. Check for a bracelet that identifies the person as having epilepsy, which would indicate a history of prior seizures.
Treat the person for shock by maintaining normal body temperature.

More tips for drivers
The first line of response when a person has a seizure is to provide general care and comfort and keep the person safe. The information below, from the Epilepsy Foundation, relates to all types of seizures. For the majority of seizures, basic seizure first aid may be all that is needed.

Always stay with the person until the seizure is over
- Seizures can be unpredictable and it’s hard to tell how long they may last or what will occur during them. Some may start with minor symptoms, but lead to a loss of consciousness or fall. Other seizures may be brief and end in seconds.
- Injury can occur during or after a seizure, requiring help from other people.

Pay attention to seizure length
- Look at your watch and time the seizure – from beginning to the end of the active seizure.
- Time how long it takes for the person to recover and return to their usual activity.
- If the active seizure lasts longer than the person’s typical events, call for help.
- Know when to give “as needed” or rescue treatments, if prescribed, and when to call for emergency help.

Stay calm. Most seizures only last a few minutes
- A person’s response to seizures can affect how other people act. If the first person remains calm, it will help others stay calm too.
- Talk calmly and reassuringly to the person during and after the seizure; it will help as they recover from the seizure.

Prevent injury by moving nearby objects out of the way
- Remove sharp objects.
- If you can’t move nearby objects or a person is wandering or confused, help steer them clear of dangerous situations.

Make the person as comfortable as possible
- Help them sit down in a safe place.
- If they are at risk of falling, call for help and lay them down on the floor.
- Do not put anything in the person’s mouth unless the person is fully alert
  - Support the person’s head to prevent it from hitting the floor.

Keep onlookers away
- Once the situation is under control, encourage people to step back and give the person some room. Waking up to a crowd can be embarrassing and confusing for a person after a seizure.
- Ask someone to stay nearby in case further help is needed.

Do not forcibly hold the person down
- Trying to stop movements or forcibly holding a person down doesn’t stop a seizure. Restraining a person can lead to injuries and make the person more confused, agitated or aggressive. People don’t fight on purpose during a seizure. Yet if they are restrained when they are confused, they may respond aggressively.
- If a person tries to walk around, let them walk in a safe, enclosed area if possible.

Do not put anything in the person’s mouth!
- Jaw and face muscles may tighten during a seizure, causing the person to bite down. If this happens when something is in the mouth, the person may break and swallow the object or break their teeth!
- Don’t worry; a person can’t swallow their tongue during a seizure.

Make sure their breathing is okay
- If the person is lying down, turn them on their side, with their mouth pointing to the ground. This prevents saliva from blocking their airway and helps the person breathe more easily.
- During a convulsive or tonic-clonic seizure, it may look like the person has stopped breathing. This happens when the chest muscles tighten during the tonic phase of a seizure. As this part of a seizure ends, the muscles will relax and breathing will resume normally.
- Rescue-breathing or CPR is generally not needed during these seizure-induced changes in a person’s breathing.

Do not give water, pills, or food by mouth unless the person is fully alert
- If a person is not fully awake or aware of what is going on, they might not swallow correctly. Food, liquid or pills could go into the lungs instead of the stomach if they try to drink or eat at this time.
- If a person appears to be choking, turn them on their side and call for help. If they are not able to cough and clear their air passages on their own or are having breathing difficulties, call 911 immediately.

Call for emergency medical help when:
- A seizure lasts 5 minutes or longer.
- One seizure occurs right after another without the person regaining consciousness or coming to between seizures.
- Seizures occur closer together than usual for that person.
- Breathing becomes difficult or the person appears to be choking.
- Injury may have occurred.
- The person asks for medical help.

Be sensitive and supportive, and ask others to do the same
- Seizures can be frightening for the person having one, as well as for others. People may feel embarrassed or confused about what happened. Keep this in mind as the person wakes up.
- Reassure the person that they are safe.
- Once they are alert and able to communicate, tell them what happened in very simple terms.
- Offer to stay with the person until they are ready to go back to normal activity or call someone to stay with them.

A seizure does not necessarily mean epilepsy. Seizures can also happen because of other medical problems, according to the Centers for Disease Control. These problems include a high fever, low blood sugar and alcohol or drug withdrawal.
What to do if a passenger has a seizure  Continued from page 11

A seizure is not always violent. Certain types of seizures will manifest as a blank stare, where the individual may not respond to questions.

ADA considerations
Oftentimes people diagnosed with epilepsy are not able to drive or may have restricted licenses. Epilepsy is considered a disability under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Due to a person’s inability to get to necessary places such as work or the doctor’s office, public transportation can be a lifeline.

Under ADA, a person with disability cannot be required to travel with a personal attendant on paratransit trips. The only exception is if a paratransit agency is legitimately entitled to refuse service to an individual with violent or illegal conduct; in these cases, the agency may require an attendant as a condition of providing service, per 49 C.F.R. Section 37.125(i).

Fixed route or paratransit?
The type of service a person diagnosed with epilepsy would use depends on their symptoms. In many cases a person diagnosed with epilepsy may find it dangerous to use fixed route service if there is the possibility of having a seizure while walking to, or at, a bus stop. Paratransit would be a better choice for this person because the disability makes it so they can’t use the regular bus system for mobility.

In sum
There are several types of seizures with different symptoms and different causes, including stroke and traumatic brain injuries. Most people diagnosed with generalized seizure disorder are not going to be able to transport themselves to and from work, the doctor’s office, the grocery store, or other destinations. These individuals will depend on you to help them with mobility. Some people, due to the severity of their seizures will need to use paratransit instead of fixed route transportation. It is important, as a driver, to be aware of the symptoms of a seizure and to follow basic steps to try to ensure the person’s safety during the seizure episode.

References

State Public Transportation Partnerships/Transit Midwest Conference

AUGUST 14-16, 2016
WESTIN CROWN CENTER | KANSAS CITY, MO

More information at http://www.apta.com/mc/statepublic/Pages/default.aspx
Technology has quickly worked its way into community engagement, turning every citizen with a computer or phone into a potential participant. Experience has shown that by including the public in the beginning stages of public projects, there is a lower likelihood of citizens protesting later. Many communities have moved beyond simply informing their populations about new projects and programs to truly engaging them in a way that encourages members of the public to become active decision-makers alongside city and agency officials. This article will introduce the mySidewalk app, an online application that can facilitate active participation. It has two complementary functions: the app allows agencies to analyze data collected from several sources—and engage the public at the same time.

Details of the app

The mySidewalk app came out of MindMixer, a Midwestern tech company that started in 2010. MindMixer was created by two planning consultants in Omaha who have since expanded and relocated their office to Kansas City. In September 2014 MindMixer launched mySidewalk to improve the way communities connect with their surroundings.

Would this app benefit your agency?

The mySidewalk app is currently used by approximately 1,400 entities across the nation, both urban and rural. These entities include public school systems, libraries, local governments, and more. The app allows the use of maps as well as written surveys to collect both qualitative and quantitative data from citizens.

Examples of users from our region

Agencies and communities using the app include:

Cedar Rapids Iowa Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): Citizens were surveyed about what they would do to increase transit usage.

City of Emporia, Kansas: Citizens were surveyed about their general impression of the city, specifically, what word comes to mind when they think of Emporia.

City of Abilene, Kansas: Citizens were surveyed about what the city could do to create more jobs.

City of Ottawa, Kansas: Citizens were surveyed about the new implementation of back-in parking and what sort of public art they were interested in seeing.

City of Seneca, Kansas: Surveys asked the public what they think would attract visitors and what is their overall vision for the city.

City of Coffeyville, Kansas: Announcements include updates and the option to provide opinions on current projects related to their Community Trail Project.

Flexibility adds to usefulness

The mySidewalk app is easily customizable to your needs for citizen input for transit projects and initiatives. Its main goal is to organize data in a meaningful way that allows both agencies and the public to analyze data to make well-informed decisions. So if you are looking for a way to easily organize data from a variety of sources, gain public input and provide an interactive, visual space for collaboration, this app can help. MySidewalk not only allows the public to participate, but they also are able to see themselves in the posted results. The interface is incredibly user-friendly, meaning you need very little technical skill, and there is a support team always available for questions.

How to use the app

Integrate and analyze data. The mySidewalk app allows you to upload your own ArcGIS shapefiles, access data from the US Census, and collect data from citizens—all in one program. By using your shapefiles as a base, you are able to build on your data set with additional information from the Census and citizens, creating several layers. You can set project boundaries and view all of the transit-dependent
MySidewalk app  Continued from page 13

populations as well as housing information and income demographics. This integration of data from a variety of sources allows you to synthesize information and perform an analysis with low technical skills, making the app accessible for a variety of users.

Create and communicate
Creating visual graphics is as easy as checking a box, allowing you to easily create maps and overlays, as well as charts of the selected information. This flexibility helps you customize how you display your data depending on your audience. You can also include survey questions with the maps and charts you create, encouraging citizens to participate by providing feedback.

Dashboards give a snapshot
As part of the app’s initiative to make data easily accessible, sharable, and meaningful, dashboards were recently introduced. Dashboards are a way to visually tell the story of an area or project with the data collected. They take just a few moments to create. They can be used to provide key takeaways, ideas for brainstorming and the next steps of a project. These can help keep the public informed and moreover engaged, without overloading them with information or lengthy documents.

What does it cost?
The app is free for community members and individuals who would like to sign up and participate, however there are fees for agencies and cities to use the app for a community engagement project. The starting price typically begins around $4,800 per year for an organization, but there are additional subscription options, such as paying month to month (with a two-month minimum). A price page will be added to the MySidewalk website soon for more information, however the company never wants price to keep an agency from using them, so if you’re hesitant about the price, reach out to them directly for a personalized quote.

Curious? Request a personal demo
To request a free demo and a personalized quote for pricing, visit the main webpage at http://www2.mysidewalk.com/ and click on the teal button “request a demo.” You’ll be asked to fill in your contact information for a personal consultation with one of the mySidewalk customer representatives. You can also sign up for a webinar, which is offered daily, if you’d like to get a better idea of how the app works. The website also has several videos that demonstrate the various ways to use the app.

Conclusion
Obtaining data is the basis for sound decisions for every project, and is often the most time-consuming, tedious part. The mySidewalk app is a creative, visual tool that can easily capture and display data. This app will allow your agency to communicate with the public, display project updates and questions, and make data-driven decisions in a more time-efficient manner. You do not need a special set of skills to use this app, and you have customer support available for all of your questions. Furthermore, the app is continually evolving and adding new functions to meet the needs of the communities who use it, so if you don’t see a function you need now, it may well appear in the near future.

Source
• MySidewalk website. http://www2.mysidewalk.com/
CONFERENCES

August 14-16, 2016
2016 Transit Midwest Conference
Kansas City, MO
(Regional transit association meeting of Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Iowa)
http://www.apta.com/mc/statepublic/Pages/default.aspx

September 7-9, 2016
National Summit on Transportation in RURAL AMERICA
Denver, CO

October 2-5, 2016
22nd National Conference on Rural and Intercity Bus Transportation
Asheville, NC
http://www.ribtc.org

RESOURCES

Federal Transit Administration. Emergency Preparedness and Operations
Webinar Recording, February 2016.

National RTAP elearning Portal

Why GTFS? Technical Brief
Interested in learning more about how General Transit Feed Specifications (GTFS) can benefit your agency? Learn about making your routes more visible to potential riders, making your agency app-friendly, and improving transit planning with tech brief. 4 pages. March 2016. Download at http://www.nationalrtap.org in their Resource Library or check here and order a hard copy below.

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The Kansas TransReporter is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the Kansas University 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 TransReporter is co-sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Kansas Department of Transportation.

The purposes of the RTAP program are to: 1) educate transit operators about the latest technologies in rural and specialized transit; 2) encourage their translation into practical application; and 3) to share information among operators.

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Calendar

UPCOMING KANSAS RTAP TRAINING:

**Responding to Emergencies in Rural Transit**
- July 12  Emporia
- July 28  Hays
- August 4  Dodge City
- Sept 1  Augusta
- Sept 7  Topeka
- Sept 8  Pittsburg

**Passenger Assistance for Rural Transit Operators**
- July 6  Winfield
- July 13  Leavenworth
- July 14  Salina
- July 27  Pittsburg
- August 3  Garden City

**Advanced Mobility Device Securement Skills**
- July 21  Wellington
- August 9  Burlington

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To register for a Kansas RTAP workshop, go to http://www.ksrtap.org. Click on “Register to attend.” Questions? Contact Kristin Kelly at (785) 864-2594 or kbkelly@ku.edu.