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NEED TRAINING?

Call our office to schedule training at your agency.

1.573.341.6155



Steve Billings Thanked for His Service

As many of you know, Steve Billings recently retired. Dorothy Yeager, OATS Executive Director, had the opportunity to present Steve with a card congratulating him on his retirement and thanking him for all that he has done for OATS and Missouri transit. She said that he helped OATS navigate the FTA regulations and pointed out that OATS has doubled its fleet during the time that Steve was with MoDOT. He retired without a lot of fanfare, but I am sure that was by design on his part. He never seemed interested in receiving the recognition he deserved. Instead he always focused on providing the best support and services possible to transit agencies, so it was wonderful to see him receive a small amount of recognition. He brought a wealth of knowledge to his role as MoDOT Transit Administrator. He started his career in transit with the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA) from 1977-1992. He left KCATA to move to Sheboygan, WI where he served as the transit director until September 2001. He then accepted the position of MoDOT Transit Administrator, a position he held until his retirement on February 27, 2015. All of us with Missouri RTAP wish to congratulate Steve on his retirement and want to thank him for his help to us as we took over the management of the RTAP program during the past three years. He was instrumental in orchestrating a smooth transition of the program. We wish him all the best in his retirement.



Dorothy Yeager, OATS Executive Director, presents Steve Billings, recent MoDOT Transit Administrator retiree, with a congratulatory retirement card at a recent OATS training event held on February 25.

Transportation Challenges and Opportunities in Our Region

Featured Speaker:
James D. Stowe, PhD
Washington University
Neuroscience Driving Laboratory

Tuesday, April 7, 2015
6:00 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.

at
Pitman Reception Center
1543 Wentzville Parkway
Wentzville, MO 63385
(636) 327-7373

A panel of professionals will respond to questions about transportation needs and options in Franklin, Lincoln, Montgomery, St. Charles and Warren Counties. We welcome ideas to improve and increase ways for people to travel throughout the region.

Please RSVP to Deana Tucker Dothage
ddothage@boonslick.org
by phone 636-359-4656
www.morides.org

Space is limited - Reservations requested

LETTER FROM THE MANAGER

Dear Transit Friends,

I hope that the first quarter of 2015 has gone well for everyone. The year is certainly off to a quick start. Hopefully as this newsletter is finished up and being sent out, the winter weather we have been experiencing will be in our rearview mirror. I think everyone is ready for spring to arrive. However, before spring officially arrives, all of this cold winter weather may have you thinking about sunshine and warm temperatures. Where better to find those than in Tampa, Florida. The CTAA Expo will be held there June 1-5. Please start planning now if you would like to attend. Doreen and I need time to review, approve and process your travel requests. I know it may seem many months away, but it will be here before you know it. The more time we have to review the requests, hopefully the fewer questions there will be when you submit the reimbursement requests after you return from the conference.




I was excited to attend the class on dealing with difficult passengers at the OATS Midwest Regional office in Sedalia on February 25. John Fields, OATS Compliance Safety Manager, did an excellent job of teaching the class. Please see the complete recap on page 3. We hope to schedule other classes in the coming months and invite the smaller transit agencies to attend. This topic has been mentioned by both large and small agencies as being necessary. We are working to fill this training need. In other RTAP training news, I am hoping to coordinate another QuickBooks class at the Cape Girardeau Career Center early this summer. My hope is that by holding it in the summer months, we will be able to schedule the class during the week. When it was held last fall, it had to be held on a Saturday because of classes at the Career Center. This prevented some who were interested from attending. Please watch for upcoming news on a class.

If you have any upcoming meetings that you would like RTAP's involvement, please let me know. I am happy to attend in order to share the latest RTAP offerings or gather your ideas in how we can serve transit agencies in the state better.

Please remember we welcome your input at any time. If you have a new facility, someone new on your staff or other news you would like to share, let us know. We will include it in an upcoming issue. We want to hear from you and feel it is important to offer expanded services that are designed around best serving our customers. Please feel free to contact me at pickerillh@mst.edu or by phone at 573-341-7637 with any questions, comments or suggestions you have. If you know someone who would like to start receiving the newsletter, they can call our office or go to the Missouri RTAP website at www.mortap.com and sign up.

Best wishes,



Heath Pickerill
Missouri RTAP Manager

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Publication Information

Missouri University of
Science and Technology,
Missouri RTAP Office

The Fine Print

Missouri RTAP quarterly eNewsletter is published by the Missouri RTAP office located on the campus of Missouri University of Science and Technology. The opinions, findings and recommendations expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of Missouri S&T, MoDOT or the Federal Transit Administration.



About RTAP

National RTAP is a program of the Federal Transit Administration dedicated to creating rural transit solutions through technical assistance, partner collaboration and FREE training.

THE MO-RTAP REPORT

Dealing with Difficult Passengers

Some call it dealing with difficult passengers, and others refer to it as conflict resolution. Whatever it is called, it is an important and relevant training topic. During the past few years, more and more transit agencies have stressed the importance for this type of training for their drivers and requested that a class be offered.

John Fields, OATS Safety Compliance Manager, recently instructed a class on conflict resolution. It was held each day from February 23-27 during a weeklong safety training workshop for drivers in the OATS Midwest Region. The class was approximately two hours long and covered a variety of topics related to conflict resolution. A few of these included how the driver projects their mood to the passengers, mediating arguments, and the importance of listening. John gave tips like lowering your voice as a means of getting someone to calm down when he/she is yelling at you so

the passenger has to lean forward and start listening more closely. He also suggested always reminding passengers that the policy dictates the guidelines that must be followed. An example is when a passenger becomes upset with being seat belted or having their wheelchair secured. Always remind the passenger that the policy requires all passengers be secured safely.

Tracy Walkup, OATS Midwest Regional Director, shared that one of their drivers who attend the training said that John Fields gave one of the best presentations that he has seen. Missouri RTAP intends to work with John Fields and OATS to coordinate more of these classes and make them available to the smaller transit agencies throughout the state. We recognize the need for this training regardless of the size of the agency. Please watch for information in upcoming newsletters on future training locations.



John Fields, OATS Safety Compliance Manager, presents information on dealing with difficult passengers during a conflict resolution training at OATS Midwest Regional office in Sedalia



OATS Midwest Regional drivers listen to a discussion led by John Fields before watching a video from National RTAP on dealing with difficult passengers

Ward named New Executive Director at SMTS, Inc.

Information provided by SMTS



Raymond Skaggs, President of the Board of Directors, announced that upon the Retirement of Bill Osborne at the end of December 2014, Denny Ward was named Executive Director for SMTS. Ward, who went to work for the company in 2006 as Controller, and was promoted to Assistant Executive Director in 2010 assumed the responsibilities as of January 1, 2015. Ward brings more than 25 years of grant writing experience, a background in human resources, local government experience, and a lifetime of accomplishments

civically. In 2009, Ward was recognized on the local and state level for his community leadership, receiving a proclamation from State Representative Shelly Keeney, the prestigious 110% Award from Regional Radio KTJJ, and the Democrat News Award for Outstanding Community Leader.

When asked what he envisioned for the future, Ward stated: "I never cease to be amazed at the number of people who are

(continued on page 5)

Communication Skills Training Available

The conflict resolution class highlighted the importance of strong communication skills when dealing with difficult passengers. It is important to have good listening and verbal skills in order to diffuse a tense situation. Missouri RTAP can offer three levels of communications skills training starting with the most basic level to communicating with employees as a supervisor. The basic communication skills class focuses on effective listening as well as verbal and nonverbal factors that influence effective communications with superiors, fellow works, and passengers. The advanced

communication skills class addresses the ability to communicate effectively in the workplace. The class introduces personality assessments and explores how to communicate effectively within an organization. Finally, the supervisory communication skills class gives supervisors the tools to manage different personalities and build strong working relationships with employees. If your agency is interested in hosting any or all of these four-hour classes, please contact the MO-RTAP office.

Basic Communication Skills covers verbal and nonverbal communication. It is an interactive course where attendees exhibit their ability to communicate through instructor led exercises. Attendees will learn the best methods of communicating with those around them, which include their superiors, fellow workers, the people they are supervising, media and most importantly the general public. (4 hours)



Advanced Communication Skills (Communicating Effectively in the Workplace) builds on what is learned in Basic Communication Skills. It focuses on introducing personal assessments and how they can be an important tool in improving individual communication skills to communicate with others. It also explores how communication skills effect an organization and how to maximize the effectiveness of any organization by improving the flow of information to avoid typical communication barriers. Attendees will better understand their own communication style as well as those around them. (4 hours)

Supervisory Communication Skills addresses managing different personalities and communicating effectively with upper and lower management. Attendees will learn why it is so important to communicate with their workers. They will also learn different techniques to let their workers know they care about them and how to develop a relationship that ensures top performances from everyone. (4 hours)



U.S. Department of Transportation Announces Reasonable Modification Rule to Improve Access to Public Transportation for Individuals with Disabilities

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Transportation announced today the publication of a Final Rule clarifying that public transportation providers are required to make reasonable modifications to their policies, practices and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure programs and services are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

“Ensuring equal access to public transportation enables individuals with disabilities to have access to jobs, school, medical care and a better quality of life,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx. “Making reasonable modifications to transit services helps bring everyone on the path to access the ladders of opportunities that all Americans strive for.”

The Final Rule applies to public entities providing fixed route, dial-a-ride and complementary paratransit services. It establishes that an individual’s disability cannot preclude a public transportation entity from providing full access to its service except where doing so would fundamentally alter the service. It also provides 27 examples of what a reasonable modification is and is not, and clarifies the definition of origin-to-destination service.

“Today’s rule simply codifies and clarifies what many in the transit community are already doing to accommodate

their riders who have disabilities,” said Acting Federal Transit Administrator Therese McMillan. “We are making sure that reasonable modifications are part of transit provider policies and more uniformly applied while keeping decision-making in their hands.”

Further, the Final Rule brings clarity to the issue of origin-to-destination policy which has had varied interpretations and was unevenly applied throughout the nation. The new rule requires paratransit providers that primarily operate curb-to-curb service to make reasonable modifications for those passengers who need assistance beyond the curb so that they can use the service. A significant number of paratransit operators already follow such an origin-to-destination policy.

Public transportation entities receiving federal financial assistance have long had the obligation to provide reasonable modifications under various laws and regulations. This Final Rule revises and fills identified gaps in the DOT’s regulations. It becomes effective on July 13, 2015.

NORTHERN PLAINS TRIBAL ROADS
Contact: Steven Kulm
202-366-9260

Ward named New Executive Director at SMTS, Inc. *(continued)*

Information provided by SMTS

(continued from page 3)

unfamiliar with who we are, and what we do. We have the opportunity to make life easier for the residents of the counties we serve, and a mission to ensure that we are there when we’re needed. The SMTS of today is not the same as it was 41 years ago when the company was established with one van and one driver, serving one county. Transportation has evolved to a greater height, people in general are living and driving longer, the need we see in society for public transit has evolved right along with these variables. Now, it’s up to us to structure ourselves to meet this need for a

population of all ages, and I have every reason to believe we can do just that.”

SMTS is dedicated to providing rural public transportation for anyone in 20 Counties in Southeast Missouri, and non-emergency medical transportation in an additional five counties. During the last fiscal year, SMTS provided just fewer than 300,000 individual rides to Missouri residents who are transportation challenged. SMTS is recognized as the second largest rural transportation provider in the Nation; second to OATS. For more information visit the SMTS website at www.ridesmts.org.

How to Reach Seniors With Your Agency's Communications

By: Lisa Harris

Editor/Manager of Communications & Outreach, Kansas LTAP

Small communities across the country have waning newspaper circulations and many are losing their newspapers altogether. The City of De Soto in Kansas has faced this issue; five years ago, the local newspaper went out of business. This affects the city's ability to reach citizens with notices about public meetings and other time-sensitive information — especially older citizens and others who don't use the internet.

"Ever since the paper went out, it's been a struggle for us to reach our older citizens who can't or won't use electronic communications," said Mike Brungardt, De Soto city engineer. "Frustrated citizens tell our council members, and our council members tell us. These citizens really feel left in the dark with no reliable way to get good information."

Brungardt said that the city has tried to figure out ways to reach citizens who don't use the internet, but, in his opinion, they are coming up short, compared with a newspaper. For example, the city has teamed up with the school district and the Lawrence Journal-World to produce a quarterly newsletter with city information. "It's nice, but it's not news," he said. "The information is provided by the city, and it is not objectively reported."

Brungardt said the Journal-World used to send an e-reporter to public meetings to report both sides of an issue, but they no longer do that, and even then, that content was only available online.

"The only private news publication left in De Soto is a little online newspaper that reports obituaries," Brungardt said, "but again, many seniors don't or can't access it."

So how DO you reach seniors? We will provide some ideas in the article, plus discuss some considerations for reaching the growing numbers of seniors who are using the internet to communicate.

Reaching seniors who do not use the internet

We did not find a lot of information out there on this topic, but we did find a useful report from our neighbors in Canada about how to reach seniors in rural areas. Some senior residents may not want to use the internet or may not have the ability to access the technology in remote areas.

The sidebar on page 11 shows ideas for reaching senior citizens, including those who do not use the internet.

You will likely have to think of innovative ways to get the word out, perhaps partnering with organizations or services with frequent contact with seniors. It may be helpful to put together an advisory group of seniors to brainstorm ideas for better communication.

Internet users who are seniors

Email considerations. An article at govdelivery.com said studies show that senior citizens are fast adopting email as one of their primary methods of digital interaction and communication. The article cited a Pew Internet and American Life Project that said that 87 percent of senior citizens (age 66-74) and 82 percent of seniors age 75-plus use email and search engines. The Nielsen Company found that checking email was the primary online activity for 88.6 percent of seniors. With these statistics, it is clear that government organizations could benefit greatly by reaching out to seniors via email.

Government organizations can greatly benefit from implementing email outreach campaigns and other digital communications efforts to engage and inform the senior citizen demographic. One benefit to email, unlike other forms of more costly communication, such as direct mail or telephone calls, people's preferences and response to emails can be tracked, allowing you to understand what is most interesting to this demographic so you can send information that is most relevant to them. Instead of waiting for senior citizens to come to your website, you could proactively send these citizens notices and news they are seeking.

ARE SENIORS USING SOCIAL MEDIA?

The Nielsen Company did an interesting survey in 2009, to investigate how seniors use their time online. The top types of uses of the internet for seniors were the same as for most other users: e-mail, mapping, checking the weather, and paying bills. What sites did they visit most when surfing the web? #1 was Google search, #2 Windows Media Player, and #3... Facebook! Just the year before, Facebook was #45 spot among online destinations for seniors. In a year, Facebook went up 42 spots in use by seniors. And that was in 2009. The Neilson study indicates that seniors are a growing demographic in use of social media. That is good to keep in mind as your city or county uses this avenue for communication.

Source: <http://rescuealertofca.com/who-are-social-medias-newest-members-seniors>

How to Reach Seniors With Your Agency's Communications *(continued)*

By: Lisa Harris

Editor/Manager of Communications & Outreach, Kansas LTAP

Website and social media site design considerations. The Pew study shows that more than half of the senior citizens — even more than Millennials — are going online visit a government website to find information relevant to them. When tech-savvy baby boomers mature into the senior demographic, the US Census Bureau predicts nearly one in five Americans will be seniors — and likely using the internet. However, with age comes some impairments that affect the ability to see and process complex information. Governments should strive to have their internet communications be senior-friendly.

A publication titled *Age Friendly Communication: Facts, Tips and Ideas.*, contains some excellent information on ways to design online sites to be more attractive and usable for seniors. Its website checklist (pg. 26 of the publication) contains tips for typeface, writing style, use of images and animation, and navigation that can be helpful for communicating with seniors. For example, the checklist recommends using a sans serif font in upper and lower case for the body text, for easier readability. It suggests presenting information in a clear, simple, and familiar way, and to use the active voice. It suggests supporting any icons with descriptive text, if possible.

All these tips help senior website users who may be become confused navigating a more complicated site for the information they need.

Conclusion

Start a dialogue with your government's communications manager, or with other departments, to see if you can improve communication and outreach to seniors, not only to report things that have happened, but to announce programs and meetings seniors might wish to participate in, or attend. Consider innovative ways to share information — or to partner in sharing information.

Some seniors are tech savvy, and more will be so in the next few decades. Keep in mind their information needs as you develop your web site and social media. Learn what makes website and social media site design more senior-friendly, and make some changes to your site designs, if needed. For more information, consult the sources below.

Resource: Kansas LTAP Newsletter, Winter 2014

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES IN REACHING SENIORS

Letter

- Hard copy letter delivered to address

Notices/Information at Natural Gathering Places

- Doctor's offices
- Senior centers
- Public functions
- Mall or grocery store displays / booths
- Nursing homes or senior housing

Two-Way Dialogue

- Education and information programs
- Meetings and presentations
- Workshops
- One-on-one meetings

Outreach Via Professionals / Volunteers

- Public health
- Home care
- Long-term care staff
- Volunteer bureau
- Book delivery services
- Public transit services
- Websites and social media

Partnering Ideas

- Seniors' newsletter
- Welcome wagon package for new seniors
- Community directory
- One-stop information center

Adapted from. Terrace and Area Seniors Needs Study, 2006. Cited in Communication Mechanisms for Delivering Information to Seniors in a Changing Small Town Context. Journal of Rural and Community Development. Volume 6, Number 1, 2011.

Other Sources:

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- Who Are Social Media's Newest Members? Seniors! Rescue Alert of California. Accessed March 12, 2014. <http://rescuealertofca.com/who-are-social-medias-newest-members-seniors>.
- Public Health Agency of Canada. 2010. <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/various-varies/afcomm-commave-caines/2-eng.php>
- Ryser, Laura and Halser, Greg. Communication Mechanisms for Delivering Information to Seniors in a Changing Small Town Context.
- Journal of Rural and Community Development. Volume 6, Number 1, 2011.
- Interview. Mike Brungardt. City of De Soto. March 14, 2014.

AVAILABLE TRAINING PROGRAMS

The following is a list of the training programs and a course description of each that are currently available to rural transit providers through Missouri RTAP. Requests for training can be made by contacting Doreen Harkins, MO-RTAP Program Specialist, at harkinsd@mst.edu or 573-341-6155.

Defensive Driving

Makes sure all your drivers know how to develop safe, defensive driving habits and attitudes. This program covers essential defensive driving techniques that can reduce collision-related injuries and fatalities and can help

you reduce insurance claims, lost work time and vehicle repairs by decreasing the number of collisions. This program also includes student course guides with a certificate of completion.



Passenger Assistance/Mobility Aid Securement

Provides classroom and hands-on training to demonstrate proper assistance techniques and mobility aid securement.

Emergency Procedures

Discusses how transit drivers should handle emergency situations such as breakdowns, collisions and transit passenger vehicle evacuations.

Drug Abuse Awareness in Rural Transit

Educates transit drivers about the hazards of both illegal and legal drugs and alcohol. Various drug-testing regulations are also discussed.

Blood Borne Pathogens

Covers various problems that may be encountered when having to deal with a body fluid spill on the bus and stresses protection for the driver and other passengers.

Operation Lifesaver – Highway-Rail Crossing Safety

Covers the importance of safety when utilizing a highway rail crossing. Laws and regulations for commercial drivers are emphasized.

Basic First Aid

Stresses the importance of calling 911. It is a program by the Red Cross that is a refresher course for CPR and rescue breathing.

Backing Safety

Reduce the number of backing collisions. The program is designed by the National Safety Council.

Reversing the Trend – Backing Safety

Emphasizes components of the Smith System Defensive Driving Institute defensive driving strategies to reduce backing collisions.

Winter Driving Safety

Covers safety tips and techniques for handling the hazards of winter driving. Topics cover pre-season preparation, pre-trip procedures, and on-the-road issues such as anti-lock brakes and obstructed views.

Fatigue Awareness for Drivers

This program covers: fatigue, signs and symptoms, factors that affect it, sleep, effect on family and social life and strategies and countermeasures.

Driven to Extremes

Covers the myths and realities of aggressive driving.

Entry Level CDL Driver Training

Meets DOT requirements for new CDL Drivers.

Diversity & Awareness Training - Providing Quality Customer Service for Transportation Passengers who have Disabilities

Learn how to provide quality customer service and support for passengers with disabilities. As a result of this training you will have an enhanced understanding of disability and diversity, improved ability to communicate respectfully and effectively with people with disabilities and increased ability to provide needed transportation accommodations.



Safe & Secure Proper Infant and Child Seat Installation

Provides information for safely installing and securing a car seat for children.

RESOURCES

Links

National RTAP – Rural Transit Assistance Program

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

National Transit Institute

<http://www.ntionline.com/>

**Transportation Safety Institute –
Transit Safety & Security Training Division**

<https://www.tsi.dot.gov/Transit.aspx>

**Federal Transit Administration –
Rural Transit Assistance Program Page**

http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3554.html

**Kansas RTAP – Kansas University
Transportation Center**

<http://www.kutc.ku.edu/cgiwrap/kutc/rtap/index.php/index.html>

**Transportation Research Board's (TRB) Transit
Cooperative Research Program (TCRP)**

<http://www.tcrponline.org/>

Upcoming Events

APTA's National Stand Up for Transportation Day

April 9, 2015

MPTA 2015 Conference

April 28-29, 2015; Jefferson City, MO

FTA Drug & Alcohol Program National Conference

April 28-30, 2015; Atlanta, GA

APTA Bus & Paratransit Conference

May 3-6, 2015; Fort Worth, TX

CTAA Expo

May 31 - June 5, 2015; Tampa, FL

MPTA Conference

August 9-11, 2015; Lake Ozark, MO

**2nd Annual National RTAP
Technical Assistance Conference**

October 27-30, 2015; Denver, CO

