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The rural transit squeeze: Rising fuel costs and increased ridership

by David Murray

The tipping point has arrived for transportation agencies in Kansas. While the price of fuel continues to skyrocket, providers are desperately looking for ways to cope with their dwindling budgets and growing ridership. Nationwide, transit agencies provided a total of 2.6 billion trips in the first quarter of 2008—85 million more trips compared to that same period in 2007 (6).

Rather than paying more at the pump, some residents are abandon-



ing their vehicles and seeking out public transit to meet their daily needs. Transit agencies are quickly trying to meet the increased demand with a budget strained by rapidly climbing fuel prices.

Fuel costs have had a disproportionate effect upon rural resi-
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Steps in transitioning to fixed route service

by Tom Worker-Braddock

In our January 2008 issue, we outlined some general considerations when transitioning to fixed-route transit service. More specific advice can be found in *Guidebook for Start-Up Transit Agencies*, by National Center for Transit Research at the University of South Florida. Below is a short summary of the steps in the process.

Step 1. Development of the vision and identification of a local champion. Identify a group or individual to sell the concept within the
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dents and providers because these programs often have longer distances to travel and smaller budgets compared to their urban counterparts. According to the FHWA, rural residents drive an annual average of 3,100 miles more than urban residents. With fuel prices hovering around \$4, the increased mileage is taking a significant bite out of rural residents' income and transit agencies' budgets.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, the average income of rural Kansans in 2006 was roughly \$10,000 less than that of Kansans living in urban areas (2). While gasoline accounts for roughly four percent of the average American family's expenditures, a study conducted by the Oil Price Information Service (OPIS) and Wright Express, "found that people in rural areas spend as much as 16.02 percent of their monthly family income on gas" (7). These price increases are having a similar effect upon transit providers who are now being called on to provide more service to more people.

What agencies in Kansas are experiencing today

Kansas residents are lucky to have a strong network of rural transportation providers, but today's situation is forcing these agencies to bear an increasing financial burden. While the size of many rural agencies is smaller than urban providers, the financial and service-planning concerns of these agencies are much the same.

Agencies throughout the state are seeing increased ridership from all segments of the population. Last year, **Lyon County Area Transit (L-CAT)** provided approximately 16,000 rides in Emporia, KS. In comparison, the agency has provided just over 20,0600 rides in just the

first six months of this year. If this pace continues, L-CAT could easily provide more than 40,000 rides this year, an increase of more than 148 percent over the previous year. Transportation Manager Ken Barrows noticed that L-CAT's biggest jump in ridership is coming from the general public.

This increase is taking a toll on the agency, and Barrows is continuously searching for ways to improve efficiency and stretch the agency's financial resources. Drivers are instructed to shut off their vehicles when they have down time, and the agency is limiting the number of cross-town trips. Barrows relates this technique to zone defense in football, and he has credited it with reducing the number of "deadhead" (without passengers onboard) trips the agency provides.

L-CAT is also establishing a park-and-ride program to bring rural residents into Emporia. The new service is in response to rural residents' requests. Additionally, the agency is considering expanding operating hours, because fuel and insurance costs are forcing the city's only taxi driver out of business.

The **Finney County Committee on Aging, Inc.** is another agency seeing a significant increase in ridership. The agency began providing fixed-route service for Garden City in September of 2007, adding to existing demand-response service. Since beginning fixed-route service, the agency has seen continuous growth in ridership. They have hired additional employees and expanded operating hours to meet the needs of the community. In the first half of 2008, they provided 9,330 rides. Based on ridership trends, Assistant Director Marcy Duncan expected the agency to provide more than 2,600 fixed-route rides during July, but the agency actually transported almost 3,600 passengers. The agency's

fixed-route service has received an average monthly increase in ridership of 15.7 percent from January through August this year. While fuel prices have put a crimp in their budget, ridership has greatly exceeded the agency's expectations.

Duncan stated that they are trying to take the fuel situation one month at a time. As a result, the agency has begun charging an increased fare for demand-response passengers living more than five miles outside of Garden City.

Other transit agencies throughout the state are finding ways to serve growing demand. **CLASS LTD** of Southeast Kansas has asked the City of Parsons to provide additional funding to help offset the increased cost of fuel. The agency also has expanded service to run through the noon hour.

While cost is a major concern

CTAA has a new program designed to provide agencies with fuel at reduced rates.

for these three agencies, decreasing service is not considered an option at this point.

In light of the increased costs, transit agencies throughout the country are finding innovative ways to serve the expanding demand. Reducing service or increasing fares would provide a quick fix, but agencies are looking to alternative funding sources, energy audits, increased collaboration, and fuel efficiency training to help meet the increased expense of operating.

Advice from the FTA Administrator James Simpson issued a statement on June 27, 2008 describing how recipients of funding under the Nonurbanized Formula Grant Program (Section 5311), Job Access and Reverse Commute Program

The driver's role in improving fuel economy

The US Department of Energy states that **each 5 mph you drive over 60 mph is like paying an additional 30 cents per gallon of gas** (3). This cost may be even higher for larger vehicles and as the cost of gas increases further.

Using a remote 55-mile loop in central California, test-drivers for edmunds.com were able to recreate a variety of driving conditions to examine typical driving habits. Their findings (in the tips below) can be easily adopted by your transit agency. Coupled with regular maintenance, providers should be able to see an immediate reduction in operating expenses when their drivers practice these simple techniques.

We test the tips

excerpted from Edmunds.com



• **Test 1: Aggressive driving vs. moderate driving**

Result: Major savings potential

The Cold Hard Facts: Up to 37 percent savings (average 31 percent)

Recommendation: Stop driving like a maniac.

• **Test 2: Lower speeds save gas**

Result: Substantial savings on a long trip

Cold Hard Facts:

Up to 14 percent savings, average savings of 12 percent

Recommendation: Drive the speed limit.

• **Test 3: Use cruise control**

Result: Surprisingly effective way to save gas

Cold Hard Facts:

Up to 14-percent savings, average savings of 7 percent

Recommendation: If you've got it, use it.

• **Test 4: A/C on, windows up vs. A/C off, windows down**

Result: Nice in theory; not true in practice

Cold Hard Facts:

No measurable difference (unless you open the sunroof, too!)

Recommendation: Please, make yourself comfortable.

• **Test 5: Check your tire pressure**

Result: Important for safety and to reduce tire wear

Cold Hard Facts: No measurable effect on the vehicles we tested

Recommendation: Check your tire pressure often but don't expect a big savings.

• **Test 6: Avoid excessive idling**

Result: More important than we assumed

Cold Hard Facts:

Avoiding excessive idling can save up to 19 percent

Recommendation: Stopping longer than a minute? Shut 'er down.

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Read more about gas savings tips at <http://www.edmunds.com/advice/fueleconomy/articles/106842/article.html>

(JARC, Section 5316), and New Freedom Program (Section 5317) can amend their project budgets to "reprogram funds towards fuel expenses." This policy provides agencies with increased flexibility to help cope with rising fuel costs.

Simpson also discussed a new Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) program designed to provide agencies with fuel at reduced rates. The program, Community Transit Energy Management Initiative, has a variety of tools designed to save money and improve agency utility services. Additional information about the program can be found in the sidebar on page 4.

Western remedies

Residents of King County in Washington State approved an initiative to expand transit service through a one-tenth of one percent sales tax increase in 2006. The tax will cost median-income households between \$25 and \$35 annually and the project is expected to increase service by 15 to 20 percent (1). With community support, similar programs could help expand service in rural Kansas counties.

The City of Telluride, Colorado is working to reduce the total number of vehicle miles driven in other municipal departments to free up income to assist with the increased cost of transit. City and county employees are encouraged to carpool to work-related events, and they have prohibited idling in government vehicles. "Since 2003, the department has been able to cut its per-month fuel consumption by about 17 percent," says Commander Eric Berg of the San Miguel Sheriff's Office (5).

Energy audits

Another viable alternative involves conducting energy audits to see where utility savings can be

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More about CTAA's Community Transportation Energy Management Initiative

The Community Transportation Association of America's energy management initiative provides member agencies with a series of energy savings and management techniques. The initiative uses a variety of tools that should help reduce costs and improve energy efficiency for your agency. There are four components to the program that might prove useful for agencies in Kansas:

The Capital Solution – This program, for agencies of all sizes, will help create an on-site fuel and storage system to reduce expenses and ensure a constant supply of petroleum. The system makes it easier for an agency to monitor fuel use. Recognizing that the process of bringing fueling onsite is expensive, the CTAA offers financial assistance through their Transportation Lending Services division to help agencies get started.

The Public Transit Solution – This system simplifies the tax-exemption process at the point of sale for on-site purchasing. It is designed for public transit agencies, and the system will reduce costs and improve reporting at the same time.

The Corporate Solution – This solution develops fuel purchase controls for community-based, nonprofit, and for-profit operators. The program limits the amount of fuel purchased within a specified time period, and it has an online account management tool to aid in expense reporting.

The Utility Solution – This final component is designed to reduce agency operating expenses through the use of an energy audit. The CTAA uses independent consultants that are not paid until the agency realizes actual energy savings – making this program quite feasible.

For more information and to register for the program, visit <http://web1.ctaa.org/webmodules/webarticles/anmviewer.asp?a=417&z=2>.

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achieved. Typically, these audits are administered by independent consultants who analyze utility bills and agency infrastructure. Some of the most basic and effective changes agencies have made involved switching to compact florescent light bulbs and installing digital thermostats that work on timers coordinated with operating hours. Although these changes seem simple, use of these products can have profound energy savings over time.

Chevron Energy Solutions is a consulting firm that has conducted more than 800 energy audits, including one for Shawnee County's government facilities in 2007. The audit uncovered some energy shortcomings, and upgrades are now planned for three county buildings. The modifications are expected to save taxpayers \$7.5 million over the next twenty years (8).

Increased collaboration

A final technique being used throughout the country is inter-agency collaboration. Jon Burkhardt found that, "coordination strategies

Resources:

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such as pooling vehicles and combining administrative operations could provide significantly better transportation services.” (4). Often, rural communities have a few small providers independently serving specific segments of the population based on funding regulations. Coordination allows these providers to meet the various needs of the community while “focusing on reducing duplication and fragmentation in operating, administering, planning, and funding transportation services” (4). In the long-run this practice allows agencies to pool resources, and the cost savings can be reallocated to address the unmet travel needs within the community. While coordinating services may initially be a complicated task, the system will realize greater efficiency and service in the long run.

South Central Illinois Mass Transit is an example of an inter-agency rural provider that serves 2,600 square miles in five counties. The system operates 50 vehicles, and it provides well over a quarter million trips annually (4). The coordination of services has been credited with providing trips that are less expensive for the customers and agencies, and it is serving areas that did not have access previously.

Conclusion

As the cost of gasoline and ridership continue to climb, public transportation providers throughout the state are being forced to find ways to stretch their budgets. Fuel costs are having a huge impact upon operating budgets, but these techniques should help fund public transit and better serve the needs of the growing customer base. ▲

Webex: New training resource for drug & alcohol testing



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by Jacob Bustad
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The amount of responsibility attached to drug and alcohol testing also means that specific training is required for those charged with this responsibility—supervisors and others—must be trained to both understand and execute the testing policies. A new resource from The Mental Health Consortium (TMHC) Services, Inc. provides a different way to access this training, online, through the Webex training program. TMHC is the third party administrator for the KDOT drug and alcohol testing program, and KDOT has continually worked with TMHC to make required training more accessible and flexible.

The Webex program was developed to address the need for flexible training. Online classes are offered each month, where trainees attend a virtual classroom while the class is taught from another location. Also, pre-recorded training sessions can be downloaded and viewed 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“The Webex program came about because TMHC staff had used

it for a training session online, and we thought it might be useful for training supervisors and employees,” Tom Swayne of TMHC said. “Obviously it has benefits for a small business or agency, because it cuts down on travel costs, which is good for both local agencies and instructors like myself.”

According to Swayne, the Webex program currently consists of live sessions offered on two Wednesdays of each month, as well as some pre-recorded sessions available for download. Swayne said that while the pre-recorded sessions will probably be updated with better sound and slides, the ease of use is

Supervisors or employees can simply download the video file and Webex software, and watch the file on a computer anytime they like.

the biggest benefit. Supervisors or employees can simply download the video file and Webex software, and watch the file on a computer anytime they like.

Individual agencies can also set up an independent session in which employees, supervisors or the entire agency gather around one or more computers as Swayne presents his information. Some agencies adjust the session to their schedules by having it take place after regular hours, allowing everyone to attend.

“We’ve had great results doing this with agencies from Oklahoma,

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Webex training resource,
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and some Kansas agencies as well.” Swayne said.

Cheryl Fisher, Drug and Alcohol Program Manager at KDOT, explained the benefits of the Webex program for the many parties involved.

“KDOT and TMHC Services, Inc. are working together to make the mandatory trainings convenient for rural providers. WebEx is one step in accomplishing this task,” Fisher said. “The flexibility of being able to provide trainings to employees without traveling to a location is one of the biggest advantages to utilizing WebEx. This service will help cut down on costs for providers and make it easier to be in compliance with the training requirements.”

Check out the Webex program at http://www.tmhcservices.com/DrugTesting/drugtesting_DOT.htm. Click on the Webex Training Center logo at the bottom left of the page. Or you can contact either Tom Swayne (tswayne@tmhcservices.com) or Cheryl Fisher (cherylfi@ksdot.org) with questions or for more information. ▲

Transitioning to fixed routes,
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local community and carry the concept through to implementation. The local champion must gain the political and financial support to begin exploring public transportation feasibility for the community. Timeframe: 12 months.

Step 2. Feasibility analysis.

The feasibility analysis is a preliminary examination of the community’s demographics and socio-economic conditions to determine if public transportation is feasible. The analysis also looks at general service

options, potential funding sources, and estimated expenses. The analysis should tie into the community’s Long Range Transportation Planning (LRTP) process. Timeframe: 12 months.

Step 3. Transit conceptual planning (TCP). TCP builds upon the feasibility analysis and provides more detailed, system-level transit service planning and forecasts. Timeframe: 12 months.

Step 4. Operations plan. The operations plan builds upon the transit conceptual plan and provides specific details for the operation and

The operations plan gives the community a specific blueprint of who the service will serve, routing plans, hours and days of service, the type, size and number of vehicles, operating and capital expenses requirements, and identified funding.

implementation of transit service. The operations plan includes a detailed service plan, specific financial details and requirements, required data collection processes, and details related to vehicle requirements. At the completion of the operations plan, the community will have a specific blue print of who the service will serve, routing plans, hours and days of service, the type, size and number of vehicles, operating and capital expenses requirements, and identified funding sources. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 5. Organization and management structure. Deciding on the operations and management structure, done concurrently with the operations plan, will determine how the system will be administered (in-house or using an outside firm). Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 6A. Selection process for a general manager. If it’s decided to

run the system in-house, a general manager needs to be selected and hired. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 6B. Request for Proposal (RFP Process). If in Step 4, it is decided to hire an outside firm to management the operations, a RFP has to be prepared. The RFP needs to include all the required federal, state and local contract clauses, and the contract parameters. It details what certifications and documentation are required, asks for a firm’s history and track record, asks firms to commit to a detailed management team, defines the responsibilities and expectations, details projected expenses, defines desired performance measures and expectations, details financial, accounting, and proposed training and safety programs. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 7. Service implementation preparation. After a general

manager is hired or a firm is selected, steps have to be taken to implement the service. These steps include, among others, re-examining the proposed schedule, deciding on fares, assigning drivers and vehicles to specific routes, deciding on a communication system, recruiting and training employees, and developing standard operation procedures. Timeframe: 6 months.

Step 8. Start of service. After the service is implemented, it is important to continue to plan, evaluate and adjust transit services and procedures, and ensure that local, state, and federal grant requirements and regulations are being followed.

Source: *Guidebook for Start-Up Transit Agencies*, July 2006, National Center for Transit Research, University of South Florida. ▲

Faith- and community-based organizations provide additional resources for mobility

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by Kelly Heavey & David Murray
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Many faith-based organizations (FBOs) across the country offer a hand in their local communities' transportation beyond their own congregations. A few studies have recently focused on this topic. Here in Kansas, Wichita State University has been granted the "Compassion Kansas" initiative designed to build the organizational strength of FBOs and community-based organizations (CBOs). Here's a look at some information we've gathered on FBOs providing transportation assistance in the United States, followed by some specific information on the Compassion Kansas effort.

FBOs perceived barriers to providing transit

The University of Montana Rural Institute released a report in 2007 after conducting a national study to determine how many FBOs have the means to transport nonmembers from their communities. 288 leaders from rural FBOs across the country responded to the survey (4). The questionnaire focused on transportation issues, barriers to providing transportation services, congregational demographics, and the congregation's general attitude to community outreach activities.

The average study-respondent presided over a congregation of 300 adults with 98 percent of the respondents representing Christian organizations. Less than one-third of those surveyed said they would be



Churches are potential partners in providing transportation service.

willing to assist in providing community transportation for individuals who are not members of their organization. Additionally, of the 288 participating groups, only 74 (24 percent) of the congregations owned vehicles.

The study identified six barriers that commonly stood in the way of an FBO providing transportation to community members who weren't participants in the FBO. They included: the FBO's mission statement, liability, a lack of skills to serve the public, staff constraints, a lack of money, and government and church policies. With over 87 percent of the respondents citing a lack of money, funding seems to be the primary barrier to providing external assistance for FBOs of all sizes.

Findings from an urban FBO study

Another survey was conducted by Cleveland State University seeking responses from the other end of the population spectrum: the urban community. The results showed that of all services provided by Cleveland area FBOs, transportation was the least commonly offered. Transportation service was offered less commonly than providing food, clothing, household goods, counseling, recreational services, education, housing and family support. In fact, only one percent of contributions were allocated to transportation services.

Successful FBOs serving elderly individuals

Some FBOs have found ways around barriers to providing transit to their greater communities. Here's one example: In 1974, Grace Lutheran Church of Grass Valley, CA established Gold Country Telecare to provide transportation for elderly individuals. According to the local chamber of commerce, 22 percent of the community's 11,100 residents are older than 65. Gold Country Telecare offers a neighbor-to-neighbor program, T.H.E. Van Program, Senior Voucher Program, Senior Sunday Service Program and charter service. Since 2000, they have provided 1,267 individuals with 28,236 rides. To learn more about Gold Country Telecare visit www.goldcountrytelecare.org.

The Paola Association for Church Action's Foster Grandparent Program is an example of a Kansas FBO that is making an

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Faith- and community-based,
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effort to serve the general public while ensuring reliable service for its customers. The Foster Grandparent Program provides about 50 senior citizens with transportation to volunteer sites in Miami, Linn, Johnson, and Franklin Counties. The program's assistant director, Jackie Needham, said their organization works with a network of five senior services providers to offer backup services for one another. While this safeguard is rarely used, it provides the agencies with the peace of mind should an unforeseen circumstance arise.

Helping FBOs and CBOs in Kansas

Kansas is doing its own part to enhance the service capacity of FBOs and CBOs, many of which lack the organizational capacity to be eligible for funding. Wichita State University's Self Help Network's Center for Community Support and Research was granted a three-year award to create Compassion Kansas in 2004, and the grant was renewed in 2007. Compassion Kansas is designed "to build and enhance the capacity of Kansas FBOs and CBOs to better serve Kansans in need" (1).

Using the Department of Health and Human Services' Federal Compassion Capital Fund, Compassion Kansas has developed a capacity-building workshop series that includes programs like "Grant Development" and "Roadmap to Becoming a Nonprofit." It also provides one-on-one technical assistance.

According to Sarah Jolley, research assistant for WSU's Center for Community Support and Research, Compassion Kansas is required to allocate at least 40 percent of its funds directly to FBOs and CBOs that have not received federal funding previously. Jolley says the money granted to FBOs and

Examples of non-profit CBOs in Kansas:

- *Cottonwood Inc.* (Lawrence, KS)—aids individuals with developmental disabilities. (<http://www.cwood.org/>)
- *TeenTown, Inc.* (Salina, KS)—provides teens with a safe and fun environment to interact one another. (<http://www.thecityonthenet.com/>)
- *Big Brothers Big Sister of Reno County* (Hutchinson, KS)—pairs at risk children with adult mentors. (<http://www.bbbsrenocounty.org/>)
- *Child Start* (Wichita, KS)—provides services designed to ensure children enter school ready to learn. (<http://www.childcareassociation.org/>)

CBOs is for organizational development, not direct community assistance, such as purchasing a vehicle.

"[The money] is to build the capacity of their organization to better improve services. A lot of what we do is in strategic planning, outcome-based planning and leadership development," she says. Much of the funding pays for common organizational expenses and technological improvements. Compassion Kansas helps relieve this financial burden, thus allowing the organizations to better focus their attention on aiding those in need.

Recipients of assistance from Compassion Kansas must provide services to one of the following groups:

- the homeless,
- elderly individuals,
- at-risk children,
- families transitioning from welfare to work,
- people in need of intensive rehab such as addicts or prisoners, and
- individuals seeking marriage preparation and educational services (1).

If an FBO is providing transportation for those categories of individuals and operates on under \$500,000 per year, they could be considered for a grant from Compassion Kansas. Such grants average \$9,000 to \$10,000 per organization. Approximately 20 awards are provided per year.

Workshops for the 2008 grant have passed, but if an FBO or CBO in your community is interested,

keep an eye on Compassion Kansas' Web site, www.selfhelpnetwork.wichita.edu/compassionkansas.htm, for updates on next year's workshops. Organizations must attend at least one workshop to be considered eligible for a grant.

Conclusion

FBOs and CBOs are an untapped resource in many communities, and they can be very helpful in filling gaps in transportation service. Perhaps collaboration could be initiated by members of your transit agency who also participate in a local FBO or CBO. This coordination could help unite different sectors of the community through transportation services.

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Got riders?

More ideas for getting and keeping them

.....
 by David Murray

This is our third article highlighting home-grown marketing tactics from *A Handbook of Proven Marketing Strategies for Public Transit*.

Partner with a grocery store

How can you promote your agency's service while improving access for your community's elderly and disabled residents? Citibus of Lubbock, TX has established a partnership with the local grocery store to provide fare-free service to the store throughout the week. The store subsidizes the cost of the service. In return, the grocer's name is advertised on the vehicle's header during the route's service, which runs once daily. Citibus has found that the partnership has benefited both the served citizens and the agency's public image. In response to the free service, the media ran a variety of stories promoting the partnership.

Get the next generation excited about buses

People Mover of Anchorage, AK created a bus-naming contest designed to celebrate the arrival of new buses in the community. More than 450 proposed names were submitted from classrooms in the Anchorage area, and the winners were rewarded with free pizza from

Pizza Hut and a ride to the christening ceremony celebrating the newly-named fleet. The marketing plan helped to raise community awareness of public transit, and it created a partnership between the agency and the local school district. A promotion like this could provide your agency with the means to develop lasting relationships within the community.

Offer free rides and a little education while you're at it

How about providing citizens with free rides for a day just for showing a gasoline receipt? Pierce Transit of Tacoma, WA initiated a promotion that allowed passengers to ride on any of the agency's buses free of charge just for showing the driver a receipt from a gas station. The promotion's intention was to raise public awareness about the difference in cost between public transit and personal vehicle use. By providing free rides, Pierce Transit was able to achieve its goals of boosting ridership and promoting transit as an economical alternative to driving personal vehicles.

While the majority of the publicity was provided free through local media outlets, the agency spent roughly \$1,400 on radio advertisements in the week preceding the promotion. As a result, more than 875 citizens received free rides, and people throughout the Tacoma area were made more aware of the

savings transit can have on their personal budget. A similar approach could greatly boost ridership in smaller agencies.

Build upon current ridership

Your agency may be experiencing higher levels of ridership these days. How do you keep the people coming back? Metro Transit of Minneapolis, MN, has created an incentive program that rewards riders for their continued patronage. Much like a frequent-flyer program, the program, titled "Ride to Rewards," has a database that tracks usage. The database supplies riders with information about changes in service, and it details the incentives and rewards that are available to the users.

For a smaller transit agency, working relationships could be established with businesses in the community to provide users with promotions and retail discounts. In return, on-bus advertising could be used as a trade mechanism. The "Ride to Rewards" program has been very successful for Metro Transit, and a similar program could work for your agency.

Although we are in a unique period of increased transit ridership, marketing is still important to help ensure that customers continue to come back. For more information about these techniques and other alternatives, read the full report, cited below, available at <http://www.trb.org> at their Publications link.

Source:

Report 50: A Handbook of Proven Marketing Strategies for Public Transit. Texas Transportation Institute, SW Transit Association, and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1999. ▲

Be wise and winterize



.....
by Kelly Heavey
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Old Man Winter is preparing to blow across our roads and take a toll on our vehicles. One annoyance far worse than waiting for a windshield to defrost is having a bus malfunction due to cold weather, with a day's schedule of work ahead. Read on for advice easily applicable to any agency looking to winterize its vehicles before the first big freeze.

Make a list, check it twice

A simple check-off sheet can help. Ken Swanson, (retired) manager of Iowa's Region 7 Regional Transit Commission, describes the use of a checklist in his article for the Iowa Office of Public Transit, "Preparing Your Buses for Winter." The checklist itself in on page 11. Some tasks are the same as for any diesel vehicle, such draining the fuel tank of any moisture so water doesn't freeze and prevent fuel from reaching the engine. Other tasks on Swanson's winterizing checklist include making sure that all tires have the proper tread depth and

covering the air conditioner condenser and its fans to protect them from the elements and prevent paying for new ones in the spring. Checking electrical components is important, too. His agency tests the starting motor and alternator, and examines batteries for charge levels.

"Any component that is marginal is repaired or replaced," Swanson said in his article. "We believe the cost of [vehicle] failures is better spent on preventive maintenance."

The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) also uses a similar checklist with 30 tasks that include checking heaters, engine thermostats, batteries and making sure that windows and doors can close to keep out the cold.

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- "How to Winterize your Vehicle." Motor Cars Limited. <http://www.motorcarsltd.com/technician-tips/winterizeyourvehicle.asp>
- "Preparing Your Buses for Winter." Ken Swanson. Iowa Office of Public Transit.
- "CTA Announces Preparations for Winter 2003-2004." <http://www.transitchicago.com/news/archpress.wu?action=displayarticledetail&articleid=113574>.

Preventative maintenance

Every year CTA's fleet of buses is thoroughly evaluated. In 2003 the CTA began a system of pulling buses out of service for maintenance so that they can work-in rebuilt buses during winter months when needed. This strategy helps prevent a service disruption caused by simple negligence or lack of preparedness for winter, long before the season begins.

"We believe that the best response to winter weather is to operate a well-maintained bus and rail fleet. New and rehabbed buses and trains help to improve the reliability of our fleet," CTA President Frank Kruesi said in a statement.

Another tactic CTA uses to battle winter weather is using preheaters on buses that are stored outside to allow the vehicles' engines to warm up quickly without idling. This saves on gas costs, and also heats the engine coolant to keep the insides of buses warm, as well.

CTA completely overhauled 65 of its buses, which entailed rebuilding the engine and transmission, revamping the air conditioning, installing new seating fabric and destination signs, and reconstructing wheelchair ramps. This kind of maintenance isn't cheap, though. It came with a price tag of \$7.3 million.

If your fleet includes vans and cars, make sure you complete your basic vehicle maintenance before winter. Brent Romans, in his article "How to Winterize your Vehicle,"

offers some good tips. Romans is senior automotive editor at Edmunds.com, a car research Web site that also has tips on vehicle maintenance.

Romans' tips are:

- Check the tire pressure, and keep in mind that pressure falls one psi for every 10 degree Fahrenheit drop in temperature.
- Check the windshield wiper fluids and the blades.
- Put antifreeze in the radiator with water so it meets a 50/50 ratio. If done correctly, the antifreeze prevents water in the radiator from freezing until -34 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Always keep an emergency kit in the vehicle, with a flashlight, first aid kit, jumper cables and tools, an ice scraper, warm clothes and extra food and water.
- Carry a bag of abrasive material such as sand or salt to put under a tire if you get stuck.

Taking these precautions will save you and your riders time and energy that are better spent fighting winter in other ways, like shoveling driveways, or maybe even throwing a few snowballs around. ▲

Winterization checklist

Vehicle Number _____ Service Date _____

Mileage _____

- Install the vehicle's winterfront or locate it and put in bus for installation in November
- Drain bottom of fuel tank
- Drain water separator on fuel filter housing
- Change-out the fuel filter
- Complete appropriate service check-off sheet (if required)
- Check operation of engine block heater
- Check glow plug timing and set if necessary
- Check tires for tire wear, change-out if tread is less than 4/32 inches
- Check coolant strength: Enter degrees:
- Install air conditioners condenser covers
- Turn on rear heater valve
- Inspect the electrical system
- Inspect alternator drive belt
- Inspect cable connections for tightness and corrosion. Enter readings.
- Check cranking motor amp draw
- Check alternator output
- Check battery condition and state of charge
- Check voltage regulator output
- Test diodes

Signature _____

Adapted from: http://www.iatransit.com/news/winter_checklist.asp

Work zone safety: Do your part

by Jacob Bustad

Although the summer heat and humidity may be over, work continues on Kansas roadways, as well as the dangers that accompany such work. In 2006 alone, 15 fatalities occurred in a construction or maintenance zone in Kansas. When it comes to work zone safety, every person has a responsibility. Road workers must know and follow regulations for

proper set-up of a work zone, police and courts must enforce traffic and work zone laws, and drivers and pedestrians must be alert and obey these laws. To make sure you are doing as much as possible to stay safe while driving in a work zone, read and act on the tips below:

Expect the unexpected. Normal speed limits may be reduced, traffic lane configurations may be changed, and people may be working on or near the road.

Slow down. Speeding is a major cause of work zone crashes.



Don't tailgate. Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the one ahead of you. The most common crash in a highway work zone is the rear end collision.

Go to page 14



What to do with e-waste?

by Jacob Bustad

When we think of pollution, often images of hazy smog-filled skies, discolored rivers or landfills come to mind. Yet the technology that surrounds us—from computers to cell phones, mp3 players to GPS systems—results in a unique form of discarded material. This electronic pollution, or e-waste, often contains dangerous toxins such as lead, cadmium and mercury. According to a United Nations report, the world produces 20 to 50 million tons of this waste each year, with the US the clear leader. But a new program in Kansas is aimed at disposing of this issue.

As your transit agency accumulates, then replaces, computer and other electronic equipment, you might ask: Why not just toss our equipment into our regular trash?

Right now, collection centers are being established in over half of all Kansas counties. If your county is listed online, contact the person listed for your county to ask when collection services are scheduled.

What alternatives are available to me? This article will provide some of the answers to those questions.

What is Kansas doing?

The Kansas E-Waste program, developed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Bureau of Waste Management, is online at www.ksewaste.org. The Web site was designed to inform and educate the community about electronic waste,



the dangers that accompany it, and proper methods for discarding. The Web site links to a list of products that can be classified as e-waste, but even more important, a comprehensive list of locations for e-waste recycling. These locations include regional and local retailers and manufacturers that are committed to e-waste recycling, and places where electronics take-back and donation programs are available.

Also, the state of Kansas recently developed a grant program that gives funding to counties to collect and process e-waste. Last fall, grants were awarded to eight groups representing 65 Kansas counties. The grants cover reimbursement for charges related to shipping, recycling and handling fees for up to \$150,000 for two years.

Collection centers are being established that will serve over half of all Kansas counties. If your county is listed online, contact the person listed

for your county to ask if collection services have started or when they are scheduled to begin. Some highlights from the program so far:

- **Seward County** (the first to begin the collection process) processed 363 pieces that were on-hand in neighboring Meade County, and collected 242 pieces in Feb and March.

- **Lake Region SW Authority** includes six counties that are working independently. Miami County processed 117 pieces that were on-hand thru March, and collected 1128 pieces in April, including a one-day event in Louisburg that filled 4 semis. Franklin County collected 450 CPUs and monitors plus 3570 pounds of peripherals in April. Anderson County collected 200 pieces in April.

- **Osborne County/Solomon Valley E-Waste Coalition** purchased trailers and has planned for a temporary storage building pending the expansion of the recycling center. They shipped over 20 tons of materials from a one-day collection in Phillipsburg.

- **Butler County and Rice County** are each in the process of building new centers at their landfills for electronic waste processing.

- **NW Kansas Regional Recycling Center** in Colby is laying the groundwork by taking steps to purchase a storage building adjacent to the current recycling center.

Why recycle e-waste?

There are many good reasons to recycle your e-waste. The amounts of harmful material in one device may be small, but consider that e-waste is

Securing and erasing computer data

When you delete a file on your computer (and even if you empty it from the Recycling Bin), the data is not completely erased. Before you dispose of that old computer, make sure you have taken the following steps to completely erase all the data from your hard drive:

- **Save anything you might want later.** Go through the data on your computer, making sure to save any data you may want to retrieve later on a CD-ROM or other type of external memory.

- **Reformat your hard drive.** This process will depend on the type of operating system you have, but usually it includes deleting the C: drive. You should then create a new C: drive, using the “quick format” option (if possible).

- **Invest in hard drive cleaning software.** This is the best way to make sure that your data is completely erased. There are many programs out there, but we spoke with Julie Fugett, Systems Analyst at the University of Kansas, to get her pick. “My favorite program for hard drive cleaning is DBAN,” Fugett said.

DBAN stands for **Darik's Boot & Nuke** (<http://www.dban.org>). The Web site describes DBAN as a self-contained boot disk that securely wipes the hard disks of most computers. DBAN will automatically and completely delete the contents of any hard disk that it can detect, which makes it an appropriate utility for bulk or emergency data destruction.

DBAN is a means of ensuring due diligence in computer recycling, a way of preventing identity theft if you want to sell a computer, and a good way to totally clean a Microsoft Windows installation of viruses and spyware. DBAN prevents or thoroughly hinders all known techniques of hard disk forensic analysis.

DBAN can be downloaded and installed on CDs, DVDs, floppies, and USB flash drives at <http://www.dban.org/download>. According to Fugett, the only downside to DBAN is its speed, or lack thereof. You need to set the program to run when you leave for the day and it should be done by the time you get back to work in the morning, at least for bigger drives. If an organization has a large number of hard drives to wipe, they may find it more time efficient (and/or cost effective) to hire a commercial degaussing or hard drive shredding service.

the largest growing sector of solid waste, and those amounts begin to add up. Toxic and hazardous materials need to be prevented from reaching the soil and water supply. There are also materials in electronics that aren't toxic, but should be conserved: valuable materials like aluminum, copper, gold, and ferrous metals.

Recycling your e-waste can also lead to the creation of new jobs, as

professional waste collection and recycling companies can open new markets for the material. And of course, recycling alone, of e-waste or anything else, saves landfill space. The “Electronic Waste Management Option Hierarchy” at the Kansas E-Waste site (www.ksewaste.org/ewaste_why.htm) can help you make sure you have taken every step possible to recycle your old electronics.

Are you going to Omaha?

Another great transit conference is right around the corner. It's not too late to register. Join us in Omaha October 19-22 and share ideas for saving money, collaboration, and good transit management with your peers from around the country. For more information, see the advertisement below. See you there!

18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation

PARTNERSHIPS *for* PROGRESS in RURAL TRANSPORTATION



October 19-22, 2008
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Omaha, Nebraska

Featured Speakers:
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Keynote Presentation

Back to the Future:
Overcoming Hindsight to Keep Rural Transit on the Road to Progress and Productivity

Michael Dilich
Foresight Reconstruction

For more information, visit the conference website at <http://www.trbruralconference.org>

Check out the Kansas E-Waste program, www.ksewaste.org, and find out how you can be involved in disposing of e-waste.

Source:

Walsh, Bryan. “Your Laptop's Dirty Little Secret.” *Time*, Monday June 30, 2008. Accessed online July 2008, <http://www.time.com/time/health/article/0,8599,1819127,00.html>. ▲



Rural Transit Conferences and Workshops

October 3-7, 2008

National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Annual Training. in Anchorage, Alaska
<http://www.nado.org/conferences/annual.php>

October 5-8, 2008

EXPO 2008. American Public Transportation Association. in San Diego, CA
<http://www.apta.com>

October 19-22, 2008

18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. in Omaha, NE
<http://www.trbruralconference.org>

October 14-15, 2008

Comprehensive ADA Paratransit Eligibility Determination. in Washington, D.C. National Transit Institute
<http://www.ntionline.com/>

November 17-20

Institute for Transportation Coordination. Washington, D.C. Joblinks Employment Transportation Initiative and the National Resource Center for Human Service Transportation Coordination
www.ctaa.org/Institute

January 11-15, 2009

Transportation Research Board (TRB) 88th Annual Meeting. Washington, DC
<http://www.trb.org/meeting/2009/default.asp>

RTAP Driver Training Sessions: Defensive Driving (a.m.) and Emergency Procedures (p.m.)

Visit <http://www.ksrtap.org> or call Kristin at 785-864-2594.

Wednesday, November 5, Garden City
 Thursday, November 6, Wichita
 Friday, November 7, Emporia
 Wednesday, November 12, Topeka
 Thursday, November 13, Pittsburg
 Friday, November 14, Manhattan
 Tuesday, November 18, Shawnee
 Friday, November 21, Salina
 Tuesday, December 9, Hays

Work zone safety: Do your part, continued from page 11

Keep your distance. Keep a safe distance between your vehicle and the roadway workers and equipment.

Pay attention to signs. Warning signs are posted to help drivers move safely through the work zone. Observe posted signs until you see one that says you've left the work zone.

Obey road crew flaggers. The flagger knows how to move traffic safely, and has the same authority as a sign, so you can be cited for disobeying his or her directions.

Stay alert and minimize distractions. Dedicate your full attention to the roadway and avoid changing radio stations or using cell phones while driving.

Keep up with the flow. Maintain traffic flow and posted speeds and merge into a work zone driving lane ASAP. Do not drive to the lane closure and then try to merge.

Expect delays. Talk with your manager about schedule adjustments when there is road construction scheduled on your route. Your agency can check a variety of sources (news-papers or Web sites) for information about upcoming road construction, or even work with your public works department to be alert to work zones or road closures.

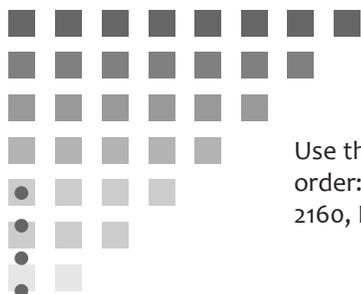
Be patient and stay calm. Remember that the work zone crew members are working to improve the road and make your drive better.

These tips were adapted from a safety fact sheet, referenced below, produced by the National Safety Council—an international non-profit organization committed to improving safety in the workplace, on roadways and in homes and communities. Visit www.nsc.org for more information.

Sources:

Roadway Work Zone Safety. Published by National Safety Council. Accessed online July 2008, http://www.nsc.org/resources/Factsheets/road/workzone_safety.aspx.

Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes by State and Construction/Maintenance Zones (2006). National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse. Accessed online July 2008, http://wzsafety.tamu.edu/crash_data/workzone_fatalities/2006. ▲



Resources Order Form

Use this order form to order the resources listed here. There are two ways to order: **Send the order form to:** KUTC Lending Library, 1530 W. 15th Street, Room 2160, Lawrence, KS 66045. **Or fax the form to** 785/ 864-3199.

Resources from our catalog

Online resources

- STARTS: Special Transit and Rural Transit Safety.**
A newly-updated training package from National RTAP consists of three training sections: Vehicle Safety Inspections, Driver Sensitivity and Passenger Relation, and Defensive and Safe Driving Procedures. It offers basic, introductory information for training new drivers and provides visual demonstrations to reinforce the message. Instructor’s handbook, student handbook and DVD.
- Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Board Members.**
A newly-updated training package from National RTAP designed to be used in the orientation process for new board members of rural transit systems. It also can be useful for experienced board members who want to be more effective in their roles. Handbook and DVD.

Section 5311 Transit Operator Directory. A directory of rural transit operators across the country. Available online at <http://209.235.239.179/rtap/userfiles/file/2007%20Rural%20Transit%20Directory-Final.pdf>

Guidebook for Start-Up Transit Agencies. A guidebook for use by agencies in the process of initiating first time transit systems, as well as to provide a comprehensive overview of the planning and programming aspects of the public transportation environment. The guidebook is designed to act as a consolidated source to inform agency personnel of various activities, procedures and programs related to initiating and continuing to operate a public transit agency. Available for download from <http://www.nctr.usf.edu/pdf/576-04.pdf>

Faith Based Organizations: Potential Partners in Rural Transportation. Rural Disability and Rehabilitation Research Progress Report # 35. Research and Training Center on Disability in Rural Communities , May 2007. Report on a national survey of rural faith-based organizations located in rural areas. The survey asked about transportation issues, barriers to conducting transportation activities, congregational demographics, and about the congregation’s general orientation to community outreach activities. Available for download from <http://rtc.ruralinstitute.umt.edu/Trn/Partners.htm>

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Kansas Trans Reporter

The *Kansas Trans Reporter* is an educational and technology transfer newsletter published quarterly by the Kansas University Transportation Center. The newsletter is distributed free to rural and specialized transit providers and others with an interest in rural and specialized service.

The *Kansas Trans Reporter* is co-sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration under its Rural Transportation Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Kansas Department of Transportation. The purposes of the RTAP program are to: 1) educate transit operators about the latest technologies in rural and specialized transit; 2) encourage their translation into practical application; and 3) to share information among operators.

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For a free subscription to the *Kansas Trans Reporter* 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 Trans Reporter, Kansas University Transportation Center, 1530 W. 15th Street, Room 2160, Lawrence, KS 66045. Send e-mail messages to Patricia Weaver at weaver@ku.edu or Lisa Harris at LHarris@ku.edu. Visit our Web site at www.ksrtap.org

Address incorrect?

Send us the inside form with your corrected address, or fax your changes to 785/864-3199.

Other services

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

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

Kansas RTAP staff

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

Project Director Pat Weaver
Editor Lisa Harris
Contributors David Murray, Jacob Bustad,
. Tom Worker-Braddock, Kelly Heavey

Partners: the Kansas DOT  and the Federal Transit Administration 

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