



INDIANA DISPATCH

*A Newsletter for Indiana's
Transportation Professionals*



Issue 3, 2009

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Department of Transportation.*

EDITOR'S NOTE: To ensure that
this newsletter is relevant to your
needs, we would appreciate your
input. Please send us article sug-
gestions, agency news, coordination
activities, "best practices," etc.

Do you know of someone from
another agency who would like a
copy of this newsletter? Do you
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mailing list? Give us a call...

STATEWIDE COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

By Megan Lawson

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), Office of Transit, pursuant to the requirements of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), required the development and submission of a "locally developed Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan" from each region and Metropolitan Planning Organization by June 2008. These plans were then the basis for FY 2008 grant awards for the Elderly Individuals and Individuals with Disabilities (Section 5310), Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) (Section 5316), and New Freedom Initiative (Section 5317) grant programs.

Each plan was to address coordination of resources between various public and private agencies and organizations in an effort to improve mobility options for older adults, individuals with disabilities, people with low incomes, and the general public. The project is intended to establish a planning framework that would educate public transit and human service transportation stakeholders at the local level (i.e., organizations that are responsible for transporting agency consumers, children, and the general public) about the benefits of coordinating public transit and human service transportation.

Coordination requires working together with persons from different agencies and with backgrounds. While not always easy, coordination among transportation providers and human service agencies that provide transportation services boasts the potential to:

- ◆ Increase transportation availability;
- ◆ Improve access to jobs;
- ◆ Enhance service quality;
- ◆ Eliminate duplicative efforts; and
- ◆ Improve the cost effective utilization of transportation dollars.



By encouraging coordination among its public transit and human service transportation providers, INDOT has the opportunity to provide innovative transportation solutions and improve transportation system performance by eliminating duplicative efforts and improving the efficiency of transportation operations.

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INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Driving Indiana's Economic Growth

Dear RTAP...



Dear RTAP,

What is up with the Modified Vans these days? The aisle seems to keep shrinking and even though I am a relatively skinny person, I now have to walk sideways to get down the aisle. I know there are other vehicle options, but my drivers really like these vans and are intimidated by the thought of a larger vehicle such as the Small Transit Vehicle. What are our options?

Signed, Give me the skinny

Due to new federal requirements regarding three point occupant restraints for all passengers, the Modified Vans took on a new interior design that significantly diminished the aisle width from fourteen inches to ten inches. While the required modification was intended to ensure safety of the occupants, the accessibility for all passengers was impacted.

Last year INDOT introduced the new Small Transit Vehicle to the vehicle selection list enabling agencies to choose a vehicle that was comparable to the modified van, but maintained the accessibility and user friendliness aspect. Selecting the proper vehicle to meet your unique service needs is a complex process and should be given considerable thought, regardless of how long a person has worked with this process. There are many issues that your agency must consider, most of them involving tradeoffs of one kind or another.

According to the INDOT vehicle selection guide there are five primary issues that require consideration in selecting the proper vehicle:

- Accessibility;
- Capacity;
- Road conditions;
- Type of service; and
- Vehicle cost.

The following vehicle types are currently available through INDOT:

- **Low floor Mini-van:** These vehicles have a capacity with accommodation for up to six ambulatory passengers, or three ambulatory passengers and two wheelchair passengers. They are the most maneuverable and fuel-efficient of the lift-equipped vehicles offered by INDOT. A CDL is not required to operate this vehicle.
- **Modified Van without lift (Type B):** This vehicle has a 30 inch raised roof and modified seating

arrangement to allow for easy access and the ability to stand up in the vehicle. This van can accommodate up to 12 passengers. A CDL is not required to operate this vehicle.

- **Modified Van with lift (Type C):** This vehicle has a 30 inch raised roof and modified seating arrangement to allow for easy access and the ability to stand up in the vehicle. This van can accommodate up to eight passengers (with lift and one wheelchair tie-down), or up to twelve passengers without wheelchair tie-downs in use. A CDL is not required to operate this vehicle.
- **Small Transit Vehicle – (STV):** The Small Transit Vehicle (138 inch wheelbase) can accommodate up to 8 passengers, plus two wheelchair tie-downs. These vehicles are built on a body-on-van chassis. The body is constructed using a steel cage and fiberglass panels. The STV **does not** require a CDL.
- **Medium Transit Vehicle (MTV):** The Medium Transit Vehicle (158 inch wheelbase) can accommodate up to 12 passengers, plus two wheelchair tie-downs. These vehicles are built on a body-on-van chassis. The body is constructed using a steel cage and fiberglass panels. The MTV **may or may not** require a CDL, depending on the seating configuration.
- **Large Transit Vehicle – (LTV):** A Large Transit Vehicle (178 inch wheelbase) can accommodate up to 16 passengers, plus two wheelchair tie-downs. These vehicles are built on a body-on-van chassis. The body is constructed using a steel cage and fiberglass panels. The LTV **does** require a CDL.

In speaking with several providers who have received and have now been operating the new Small Transit Vehicles for the last several months, there is a consistent message that is being heard: Drivers love them!



Initially, there was concern among drivers and managers alike that the vehicle seemed larger, would be more costly to operate, and less maneuverable than the Modified Vans. However, since receiving the vehicle, the drivers who are putting the rubber to the road have clearly indicated their own satisfaction as well as the satisfaction of their passengers.

Drivers find the roomier interior of significant benefit when it comes to transporting and securing passengers who utilize mobility aids or even for those passengers who need just a little assistance with boarding. Drivers have been particularly surprised by the maneuverability of the vehicle and easy access for them to get in and out of the vehicle.

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TAKING THE MYSTERY OUT OF CUSTOMER SERVICE

What is customer service? As defined by Wikipedia Encyclopedia, customer service is the provision of service to customers before, during, and after a purchase. Why should transit even consider customer service as an important component in providing service? Because, with the ever shrinking state and local dollars, transit systems need the support and the positive voices of their customers to be heard by elected officials. Good customer service will enhance the level of customer satisfaction, which can directly help to improve a transit system's image in the community. And, a positive community image can only help support your requests for continued, or increased, funding. A satisfied customer will tell three to five people about his or her positive experience, but an unhappy customer will tell eight to ten people about his or her negative experience. Each staff member, whether that person is a driver, dispatcher, scheduler, mobility manager, or coordinator, must demonstrate professionalism and positive interactions when dealing with even the most difficult passengers.

The National Rural Transit Assistance Program's (RTAP's) Scheduling and Dispatching for Rural Transit Systems recommends the eight "C's" of customer service:

- Caring—Show concern and be sensitive to the individual.
- Competent—Know your job so you can answer questions with confidence.
- Committed—Find a solution to a problem, follow through, and take responsibility.
- Creative—Be innovative when trying to solve recurring problems.
- Considerate—Treat everyone with respect, and give the individual the benefit of the doubt.
- Controlled—Remain in control, and do not take comments personally. Focus on solving the problem rather than placing blame.
- Contagious—Be positive and enthusiastic.
- Confidential—Keep customer information confidential and only share the information as required.

Although all transit system employees have some impact, direct or indirect, on an individual transit rider's experience, it is the actual ride that leaves the biggest impression. Transit systems should encourage passenger feedback to monitor their transit rider's actual riding experience. One method

is the use of comment cards. Comment cards provide the transit rider with the opportunity to comment on everything about their entire trip, from the time their trip was scheduled to the time they are dropped off at their destination. Transit agencies should keep self-addressed customer comment cards in all vehicles that can either be given to the driver or dropped in the mail.

Another method used by transit systems to evaluate customer service is driver ride checks. Drivers are your direct connection with your customers; they have the most impact on a rider's customer experience, positive or negative, with your transit system.



To help monitor and evaluate this experience, ride checks, or road evaluations, are excellent tools to measure both driver performance and customer service. As the transit director, however, you are probably saying right now, oh, all I need is one more thing to do. BUT....while you may want to conduct your own driver ride checks as part of your overall employee performance evaluation process, customer service ride checks can be accomplished through a coordinated effort with other systems in your region by using mystery or "ghost" riders. Ghost riders pose as a typical transit rider, but are actually evaluating customer service and can also gather specific information that you may be interested in. These ghost riders experience first hand how driver actions and driving abilities impact the customer while providing you with the information you need for ensuring good customer service and to determine in which areas you need to focus your driver training. Contact the Indiana RTAP office, (800)709-9981, for several sample checklists that you can use as an evaluation tool during ride checks. They may also be able to provide you with information about which systems are already conducting customer service ride checks.

In the past, little resources were available for transit systems wishing to provide customer service training, but that is about to change. A Customer Service Module, which is included in the National RTAP Training Package for Scheduling and Dispatching for Rural Transit Systems, will soon be available through Indiana RTAP. Please check Indiana RTAP's website for additional information and for other training resources.

Submitted by: Jane Bogard

TEXTING AND DRIVING

Cell phones continue to be a major problem for drivers behind the wheel and now it is not just talking on the phones that is a major safety hazard: it is texting. Inattention to the road has fast become the root cause of most accidents and is easily comparable to driving while under the influence. While driving the interstates, highways, and rural roads of Indiana, I have seen drivers engaging in a multitude of unsafe behaviors while driving. My observations have included:

- Reading a newspaper, book or map;
- Shaving or putting on make-up;
- Changing clothes;
- Eating (bacon, eggs, and toast on a plate with a fork from home);
- Using a computer; and
- Talking on the phone or texting.

Any behavior behind the wheel that distracts the driver's full attention from the road is a dangerous behavior. Even a simple conversation with another passenger in the vehicle is a distraction. These distractions can affect:

- Following distances;
- Speed;
- Reaction time; and
- Stopping distances.

Cell phone use behind the wheel was bad enough, but now with texting the driver is not only engaged in a conversation taking their "full" attention away from the road, but now they are taking their eyes off the road and one hand off the steering wheel. In fact, text messaging was determined to be the cause in a September, 2008 Metrolink crash in Chatsworth, California that resulted in 20 fatalities and 100

injured. The engineer failed to stop at a red signal and collided with a freight train. On May 9 of this year, texting was the cause of a Boston trolley crash that left 50 people injured.



The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) will undertake an enforcement demonstration project later this year showcasing how states can effectively enforce a cell phone ban. Several states currently have laws banning cell phone use or requiring the use of hands free devices, but enforcement of these laws has not been adequate enough to deter drivers from their use.

Transit agencies must have policies regarding cell phone use with special emphasis on use by revenue vehicle operators. In a few systems in Indiana, cell phones are the means of communication between the driver and dispatcher. In those cases, policies must be implemented regarding the safe use of these devices, such as pulling off in a safe location to take or make a call. Some transit providers are now going to the extreme of banning drivers from even being allowed to have a cell phone with them when they are operating a transit vehicle to ensure that the driver does not talk or text while driving. If you need a sample policy to address cell phone use in your system, please visit the Indiana RTAP website at www.indianartap.com and click on our resources link. You can download the policies and procedures manual and will find a cell phone use sample policy on page 39. For additional information, please contact the RTAP offices at (800) 709-9981.

Submitted by: Vicky Warner

Resources: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA); Governors Highway Safety Association; and Automotive Fleet.

STATEWIDE COORDINATED PUBLIC... *continued from page 1*

As part of my Indiana RTAP responsibilities, I am now the liaison between INDOT and the regions, providing follow-up and support as each region implements its coordination plan. Jane Bogard, RLS & Associates, Inc., is assisting me with attending the regional coordination meetings. We have already met with Region 2.2 which includes the counties of Clinton, Carroll, White, Warren, and Benton. This region's steps for updating its plan included adopting a mission statement, establishing by-laws, and electing officers. The group realized that many of the goals had already been met. The next step for the region is to hold

a public meeting for "stakeholders," all individuals and/or agencies in the region with a "stake" in the region's transportation services, either as a provider, purchaser, or advocate. At its following TAC meeting, each member was responsible for sharing names and addresses of members from the community that have a need or an interest in transportation services.

We are currently scheduling meetings with the other regions. If your region has any questions about its Coordination Plan or the assistance that Jane and I can provide, please feel free to contact me (800) 709-9981, or email me at mlawson@indianartap.com.

BENEFITS OF ATTENDING CTAA

Attending the CTAA Conference was a wonderful reversal from the heat we encountered last year at New Orleans, and the weather and scenery were wonderful! Our own Beth Browning, Ride Solution Transportation Coordinator, competed in the National Roadeo and finished in 2nd Place in the Van Competition...we were so proud! The course was great, and the camaraderie with the fellow judges from all over the U.S. is always a great time.

We were able to participate in several classes this year. They included:

- Is Your Transportation Program Performing Effectively? Measuring Outputs and Outcomes.
- Effective Driver Training: An Overview of RI Public Transit Authority's Driver Training Program.
- Designing a Well-Built Transit Maintenance Facility on a Budget.
- How to Develop Service Options.
- Planning Ahead: The Future of Coordination.

Ride Solution currently provides services in an eight county area with plans to expand to ten counties in 2010. We gathered many valuable tools and ideas that we can incorporate into our service plan. We also learned about several cost saving measures that will help us as we begin to construct a new maintenance facility with our ARRA Grant. However, meeting fellow transit professionals, gleaning new ideas, and seeing where they might fit within our agency is definitely the most valuable part of the conference. We appreciate the support RTAP affords our agency in attending.

Submitted by:
Becky Guthrie, CCTM
Director, Ride Solution

Beth Browning
Transportation Coordinator

There is always LOTS to learn and see at these events.

The Roadeo is an exciting way to kick off the conference, and this year our Indiana drivers made us proud – both finishing in the top 5! Beth and Joe did an outstanding job.

The conference sessions are very diverse in subject matter...from a question and answering session about the stimulus movement to passenger assistance techniques. There is something for everyone.

This year a couple of the sessions really stood out. The emergency preparedness session given by transit professionals from different geographical areas did a great job, explaining the importance of having a plan and using it when disaster strikes. (Sue Chappel, another Indiana participant, spoke about the Columbus, IN flood).

Passenger Assistance Techniques.....managers, how many times do we tell our drivers how important wheelchair and passenger securement is? Well, let me tell you – this session was VERY enlightening!! Participants of the class watched videos of real accidents of wheelchair passengers who were not secured properly as well as accidents where passengers were allowed to ride without seatbelts. We were given ideas on how to “checkup” on our drivers when they least expect it, to that insure proper procedures are being met.

Although all the sessions I attended were equally important and interesting, these were two of my favorites. Hope to see you in California next year!

Submitted by:
Kelly Bauer
Transportation Director
Jasper County Community Services, Inc.

DEAR RTAP... *continued from page 2*

The Small Transit Vehicle is about 50 inches longer than the Type C van and the width of the vehicle is about the same (81 inches versus 79 inches, less the mirrors). Visually, the Small Transit Vehicle appears to be much larger, but in fact is very comparable in size. The Type B/C vans still play a very useful role in some agency fleets and will continue to be offered by INDOT as a vehicle option.

For more information on the vehicles available through INDOT, you can access the INDOT Vehicle Selection Guide on the Indiana RTAP website by clicking on the resources link at www.indianartap.com. For additional questions and information, you may also contact the RTAP staff at (800) 709-9981

Resources: INDOT Vehicle Selection Guide; SIT; Jasper County; and ACCESS Johnson County.

RTAP News & Notes

Beth Browning from Ride Solution placed 2nd and Joe Dean from ACCESS Johnson County placed 4th in the National CTAA Roadeo on May 31 in Providence, Rhode Island.



On June 4th while attending the National RTAP breakfast for State RTAP programs, the Indiana RTAP staff accepted the Most Outstanding State RTAP Program award on behalf of INDOT. The Indiana RTAP program was recognized for its many layers and outstanding training programs, technical assistance, and oversight.

Congratulations to INDOT and the INDOT staff for this outstanding award!

If you have visited the RTAP website lately, you should have noticed the Indiana RTAP program's new look. The website sports a new look and feel with site search, Yahoo search, and downloadable resources built in. The RTAP program is also now sporting its new logo, which signifies the multiple directions and layers of RTAP. Visit us soon at www.indianartap.com.



The RTAP staff was recently informed that Rita Baker with Kosciusko Area Bus Service (KABS) and Jennifer Weinstock with Wells County Transit (WOW) have both left their prospective agencies. We would like to thank them for their many years of service and their invaluable contributions to public transit. Good luck you will both be missed!

INDOT News & Notes

INCOST annual conference. Mark your calendars and plan to attend this important annual training and informational session on September 30th. In addition, the INDOT staff would like to encourage your attendance at this year's annual INCOST conference, which will include topics on Causality vs. Reactive Thinking, How to Invest in Your Future,



New Employment Laws and ADA. Look forward to seeing you there!

Hello INCOST Friends,

It is finally that time of year when the baseball games have come to an end at the Layton Household. I will miss the cheering and yelling and even the ball park hotdogs and pretzels with cheese that came to be dinner for my family many nights out of the week. But now that the season is over, I have two things to really focus on for the remainder of the summer: getting in shape and losing my hotdog eating legs, and planning the 2009 INCOST Conference.

This year's conference will be held Thursday and Friday, October 1-2 in Downtown Indianapolis at the Embassy Suites and Conference Center. This facility has just been newly remodeled, and the Conference Center is very nice. The rate is \$99.00 a night, and you can reserve your room today under the INCOST block of room at (317) 236-1800. Hopefully, there will be no water dripping on anyone's head like we experienced a few years back.....the rooms look beautiful!

Once again, we will coordinate with the Section 5311 annual meeting, which will take place immediately preceding the Conference on Wednesday, September 30. Our speakers will be addressing several different topics, and I believe that everyone will benefit from the information they receive this year. One speaker, Shan Sheridan, will be talking about causality vs. reactive thinking. This 'out of the box' thinking will focus on how to be prepared and think ahead of things that might happen in the future. Can't we all benefit from learning how to put out fires before they actually happen?? We also have a representative from Baker and Daniels back this year to address some of the new employment laws and how they affect your organization.

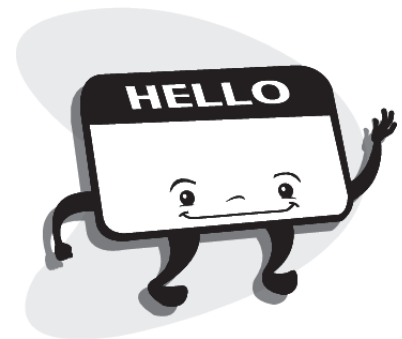
We are pleased to welcome Roland Mross from CTAA to share some of the exciting things happening within their organization. Did you all know that next year's CTAA conference is going to be held in Indianapolis? Yea for Indiana!

Also on the Conference agenda this year is a financial planner who will talk to us about how to pay yourself first and ways in which you can help your employees out during some rather difficult financial times.

You won't want to miss the first evening of the conference when vendors will be available with their products on exhibit. Thanks to Indiana RTAP Coordinator Vicky Warner for this wonderful idea. The vendors will also be on hand that evening for our awards banquet. What better opportunity for us to give them a big thank you for all they do to sponsor our yearly Roadeo! And, our 2009 Roadeo winners will be honored during the banquet.

Indiana RTAP handouts will be available at the back of our conference room for distribution throughout the Conference. I hope that you will all plan to join us for this worthwhile and informative conference. While the information shared during the conference sessions is important, perhaps the best part of any conference at this level is the friendships and networking that take place during the breaks and meals.

Registration materials will be mailed soon. If you did not previously receive a 'save the date' postcard and want to be added to the mailing list to receive the conference materials,



please contact me at (765) 659-4060. As always, it is a pleasure to work with the membership and Board of Directors on such a fun Committee!

Dawn Layton, Conference Chair and INCOST Board member.

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Who else in your agency could benefit from the Indiana Dispatch?

Route to: _____

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- ***INCOST CORNER***

For additional resources please visit: rlsandassoc.com

CALENDAR

AUGUST TRAINING:

- 08/12/09 PAT/Pre-Trip @ Plymouth
- 08/18/09 Diversity/Sensitivity @ Lebanon
- 08/20/09 PAT & Evac @ Peru
- 08/21/09 Diversity/Sensitivity INCOST @ Lebanon
- 08/22/09 PAT & Pre-Trip @ Evansville
- 08/25/09 Diversity/Sensitivity @ Rochester
- 08/26/09 Diversity/Sensitivity @ Columbus
- 08/29/09 PAT @ Frankfort

SEPTEMBER TRAINING:

- 09/12/09 Stress/Fatigue & Customer Service @ Liberty
- 09/17/09 Difficult People @ Valparaiso
- 09/19/09 PAT/Pre-Trip @ Renselear
- 09/24/09 PAT/Pre-Trip @ Vincennes
- 09/26/09 Diff People/Customer Service @ Clinton
- 09/30/09 INDOT Annual Section 5311 Meeting @ Indianapolis