

Everyone on the Bus Twitter Chat October 17, 2018

Summary

Kari Banta, National RTAP Review Board member and Texas DOT Program Manager, RTAP and Section 5310 led a rousing [#Every1ontheBus](#) Twitter Chat on October 17, 2018. Melissa Gray, @NADTCmobility Program Manager, joined the chat as one of our experts in attendance. Making transit available to everyone means considering the specific needs of different riders, particularly seniors and individuals with disabilities. The chat raised questions that touched upon themes including: Are you looking for ways to improve the rider experience? and What has your system done to encourage first time passengers and make individuals comfortable with transit?

Visit the [chat transcript](#) for questions asked during the chat and attendees' replies. We have also provided answers to questions received after the chat below.

Question 1: What's the top barrier to riding transit in your community? What's been the most successful change or innovation?

Answers

Barriers:

- People not even knowing that transit exists in their community and can serve them.
- The route to the bus is often the greatest barrier to using transit! Complete the sidewalks and update stops so that they are ADA accessible.
- Limited operating hours and other transit providers not being able to operate within city limits during Dial-A-Ride hours.
- Real time information so I know when the bus is actually coming. In bad weather or when I am trying to connect with a plane or train it makes using transit a positive experience.
- [HIRTA](#)'s #1 barrier is the perception of what we do vs. what we actually do, especially that we only serve seniors or those with disabilities. #2 barrier, agencies discussing transit being a barrier, but not having any transit person at the table.

Successful Changes and Innovations:

- [NADTC](#) has some great resources for planning this type of work, such as [Accessible Pathways to Bus Stops & Transit Facilities](#).
- For transit systems in rural towns getting to know the planner and helping them see parts of town where rolling or walking can mean accessing fixed route rather than DRT service. They get \$\$ for sidewalks and can improve your stops.
- National RTAP just created a webpage about [helping people find transportation](#)
- Key Opportunities, Inc. is working very close with Dial-A-Ride to try to overcome this barrier. And building relationships with outside transit agencies to get permission to transport within their area.
- If you have GTFS adding real-time info to your Google feed is a great way to integrate with your schedules. Rural and tribal transit agencies can use National RTAP's free [GTFS Builder](#) Web App.
- Invite us (transit folks to the table) - we will come!

Question 2: How does your transit system reach out to potential new riders?

Answers:

- Senior events, fairs, and health clinics are a great way to share brochures, schedules, and contact information for your transit system.
- National RTAP posted links to [key resources on ridership](#).
- My favorite way to inform new riders is to find out which day has the most popular lunch at the senior nutrition center and plan your visit then!
- HIRTA does a variety of things to reach out to people. Attending events such as Farmers Markets has been hugely successful with getting input from people, and just having one on one conversations about current and future transit needs. We also email or mail out Welcome Packets to anyone who calls us about service. It includes a welcome letter, brochure, service policy, magnet and free ride voucher.
- [Key Opportunities, Inc.](#) presents at community events, and agency meetings. Reach riders through websites and have handed out surveys to community as a way to involve them more and educate them on the services that are available.

Question 3: Share with us how you've made transit more welcoming and accessible to your community.

Answers:

- Transit agencies around the country think of ways to make their systems welcoming, including offering free ride days like [Capital Metro](#) and [Pierce Transit](#). Capital Metro recently extended its free ride program for kids 18 and under.
- NADTC provides transit operator training resources on communication, ADA rights and responsibilities, and customer etiquette. It's a step toward improving the travel experience for passengers and drivers alike.
- Making the transit experience nicer is good for everyone, including the operator. It's possible to build a real sense of community that way.
- People like to feel good about choosing transit even if they don't have many choices. Showing your customers respect is a great "thank you."

- Key Opportunities, Inc. is providing PASS training for all drivers to educate them on ADA regulations and sensitivity of passengers. Have thought about giving free rides for a day so people can experience what riding on a bus is like. And maybe take away any fears they may have.
- Benches in areas where you know seniors or persons with mobility challenges travel often can help people use the bus if they can't stand for 10-20 minutes waiting.
- Here we say Texas Friendly, what do you say in Iowa? We say Iowa Nice!

Question 4: What has your agency done to help seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income populations, persons whose first language isn't English, and other transportation disadvantaged groups?

Answers:

- HIRTA launched an App that allows people to schedule/manage their own rides and an online payment option. We did testing with seniors, those with disabilities, college age, commuters. Technology like HIRTA's app can really empower transportation disadvantaged groups
- Key Opportunities, Inc. assists individuals to develop basic work-related skills to enable them to achieve productive work within our communities.
- [TX DOT](#) has an agency in Texas who developed a marketing campaign specifically for Hispanic seniors. Cultural sensitivity is a must with diverse populations.
- National RTAP translated our popular 2 The Point Driver Training into [Spanish](#) this year.
- NADTC's training materials, including our Transit Operators Pocket Guide and Service Animal bookmark, are used by bus and rail systems across the country. Their current and archived webinars and twitter chats are so helpful too for people looking to learn how to best serve persons with disabilities.

Question 5: Tell us about how your transit system solicits feedback from riders and the public. Does your transit system currently have a mobility management program? How about travel training? Time to brag!

Answers:

- [Mountain Line Transit](#) does have Mobility Manager as well as a travel training program. National RTAP likes their one-on-one travel training approach for groups like veterans, students, persons with disabilities, etc. Everyone has different needs and all will benefit.
- Accessibility assessments are one way for riders and the public to provide feedback on how safe or easy it is to reach the bus stop based on sidewalks, lighting, barriers, and the conditions on the transit vehicle. Their [Checklist for Assessing the Accessibility of Transportation and Mobility](#) is a great resource and will be added to the National RTAP [ADA Topic Guide](#).
- While doing travel training HIRTA discovered there is a fear among seniors and those with disabilities, when it comes to being left somewhere - or them missing their scheduled ride home. Those are real and a free ride or travel training can help.

Takeaways: Pulling it all together – what takeaways from this chat can you bring back to your agency to bring #Every1OnTheBus?

Answers:

- It sounds funny but studies on real time bus info show that people think there is more service and better service with no change in service.
- Getting people in the door and in a seat can change a lot of opinions, too.
- Flexibility is so important given all of the challenges transit can face.
- Continued dialogue and sharing of resources are needed to transform local ideas into practical solutions to strengthen community transportation systems and to get everyone on the bus.