

National RTAP Transit Manager Peer Roundtable, 5/29/19 – Notes

- 1. Issues related to Lo/No Emissions vehicles (hybrid/electric/CNG) - Availability on state contracts, fueling stations, trained maintenance staff.**
 - a. There was no interest in discussing this topic today.

- 2. Working with community colleges on apprenticeships/workforce development.**
 - a. One participant spoke about how her agency utilizes local schools and universities.
 - i. They give older vehicles to high schools for working on in auto shop classes.
 - ii. They have used three area colleges/universities to do work for the agency for free: to develop a software app for timesheets, for developing grants, on their strategic plan, and developing advertising campaigns. A great opportunity for free work and giving the students a chance to get real world experience.
 - b. Another participant said a local university offered a course in Public Transit in their engineering department, and through that they built a bus stop. Not planning to offer the course every year, but hope they offer it regularly.

- 3. Partnering with local employers - Do you have commuter shuttles to those employers? Do they contribute to the service? Or do you have a transit pass program?**
 - a. One agency has a local pharmaceutical manufacturer and they do a trip that takes employees 3/day for different shifts. The business doesn't contribute to the service; passengers pay an amount per month for the service and they may get some back from employer. It adds about 80 boardings per day for the agency. Been doing this a while and it works well. They also have a Ride to Work program with tickets and zone fares using their fixed route service, offering half price for tickets. A lot of employees who utilize it work in fast food restaurants.
 - b. One regional transit agency doesn't offer commuter shuttles necessarily, but they worked locally on a five-county regional coordinated human services plan, which highlighted the need for connections between two of the main population centers. The agency then approached the medical centers in both communities and they financially support a route that offers a connection between both, including the medical centers and some other towns between. The agency assigned one vehicle for the service and in exchange for the funding for the service, they advertise on the vehicle for the medical centers with a bus wrap. The medical centers pay part of the route cost, so it can have lower fares – a \$2 general public fare for a 27-mile one-way trip. Also, some human service agencies in one of the communities pre-paid 1,000 trips and collectively bought passes in advance. It got the route off to a good start.

They are doing their one-year assessment soon - collecting data now and will be reviewing ridership, etc.

- c. Another agency said they are starting a new service next month that will go to six local manufacturers. They worked with the economic development agency in the county, and got grant money from the state DOT for the service. After the service is started, the local city will go to employers to buy into it to keep it funded, as they already have a relationship.
- d. This same agency also has a program with Goodwill, where anyone who does a Goodwill career development program can ride transit free for 30 days to get to new job, so they can get some paychecks under their belt. Goodwill funded it through a grant program. The agency started it in one county and duplicated it another county as it worked so well. They got special state funding for this. Now they're working on relationship with workforce development, to tap into that funding also.

4. Safety plans/SMS at rural agencies.

- a. There was no interest in discussing this topic today.

5. What is your process for onboarding a driver and what trainings do you require them to take before they head out on the road?

- a. One agency has a checklist of training/tasks for new drivers. It involves training on the computer and some hands-on training and work. They do ride-alongs with someone else. It is a few weeks before they get on the road themselves. Their agency has two PASS certified trainers and the state has trainers come in and they do first aid training every other year. Their insurance company also offers training and they use National RTAP materials too.
- b. One agency uses TAPTCO's training program (<https://taptco.com/about-taptco-driver-training-programs/>) – 8 hours the first day, have to pass to move on to second stage. They have a wheelchair to practice tie downs, they use a blindfold to do sensitivity training, and use impairment goggles for driving simulation. They do tests after each session. Then the driver observes other drivers, and then they drive and are tested that way. The agency also offers a training program for people to get their CDL, if they want to do that.
- c. This same agency said that before they hire a driver, they have them ride on the bus with a driver and see what it's like, to make sure they are all in, so they don't waste time training them, to find out that they don't like it. They want bus drivers to know what they are signing up for.

6. How to find and keep drivers, especially with a CDL.

- a. One agency said that attracting and retaining drivers a big issue. They recently have had a 30% turnover ratio, up from about 20/25% last year – and there is a high cost from this turnover. One thing they started recently is holding open interviews, to just get people in the door. They put an add out locally and say something like “Come in from 8-2, no appointment needed. They just drop in and the HR and division manager are available for an open interview format. A lot of fast food restaurants

and grocery stores do this, just get word out about openings and to make it easy for applicants. They brought in four people that way and hired them all. They are a regional agency with a 1,700 sq. mi. service area, with four population areas, and they are planning to do rounds of these open interviews in each location. They still need 5-6 drivers.

- b. One participant asked if other agencies do exit interviews. The response was that they recently started doing that, especially now that they have an HR manager. What they've found is that people like the work generally, and they like the company and the work environment, but it comes down to money and they are not competitive enough with wages. The agency is looking to have a school or organization do a wage analysis to see how they compare and then look at how they can increase wages or other incentives.

7. How do you collect your data? (Vehicle revenue miles and hours, trips, boarding and alighting data, etc.)

- a. One agency mentioned that they use Routematch and collect all their data that way. The bigger issue is what to do with it all. National RTAP's new Cost Allocation Calculator will be useful. Especially for showing the true costs when negotiating and also likening the fare to a co-payment. This is particularly helpful for aging agencies and making people pay a fare.
- b. One agency said you can also use your data to find out who you're not serving, by looking at the areas and populations (and thus demographics) of your riders and looking at the gaps. You don't need to market to who is already riding, so this helps them see who they do need to market to.

8. Working with Medicaid/NEMT brokers.

- a. It was mentioned that in one state, mobility managers are now required to work with NEMT/Medicaid brokers. There is no oversight of NEMT providers, but they want a pulse to know who the providers are. They make sure they are invited in coordinated plans and coordination/planning meetings. They involve them in work related to one-click, one-call centers. They can't require the NEMT providers to do anything, but we can require the mobility manager to try to coordinate, to increase buy in and conversations, and to avoid duplicative service.
- b. Someone else mentioned that in their state it is written into state code that agencies have to work together. And it works – there is good coordination.
- c. One agency said they are struggling to keep the brokers out for NEMT, and asked the group if people on the call have examples of contracts that agencies have signed with brokers or who declined to sign with brokers. A few agencies said they would share contracts.

9. Does your agency have a vanpool program?

- a. Did not have time to get to this topic today.