Assessment of Immediate Small and Rural Transit Training Needs

Created for:

National Transit Institute

Prepared by:

Jill Hough, Ph.D.
Ali Rahim Taleqani
Rob Lynch

NDSU UPPER GREAT PLAINS
TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

Acknowledgement

The Small Urban and Rural Transit Center (SURTC) changed its name to the Small Urban and Rural Center on Mobility (SURCOM) in January 2020 to reflect the center's expanded focus on all types of personal mobility.

Disclaimer

The contents presented in this report are the sole responsibility of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute and the authors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

1.   INTRODUCTION

The National Transit Institute (NTI) contracted with the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center (SURTC) located within the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute (UGPTI) at North Dakota State University (NDSU) to complete a survey to assess the immediate training needs of rural and small urban transit agencies. The immediate training needs were based on the already existing NTI courses that could be adapted to meet the needs of rural and small urban agencies.

Objectives of the project were to 1) develop a survey tool in consultation with NTI for small urban and rural transit agencies to determine which existing NTI course offerings will meet their particular training needs, 2) administer the survey to FTA Section 5311 recipients in rural areas with populations of less than 50,000 and to FTA Section 5307 recipients in small urban areas with populations under 200,000, and 3) analyze the survey results and prepare a final report.

2.   SURVEY DEVELOPMENT AND DATA COLLECTION

SURTC and NTI staff reviewed the current list of 75 NTI trainings and discussed which ones would most lend themselves to the needs of the target recipients, rural and small urban transit agencies. The survey contained 53 of the 75 NTI training courses currently available. The 53 NTI courses were categorized within seven areas of training:

- Safety and oversight
- Planning and the environment
- Demonstration and innovation
- Procurement
- Civil rights
- Program management
- Budget and policy

The survey questionnaire contained 27 questions, which were entered into the online data collection software Qualtrics. Recipients were first asked to rate the level of importance of the seven categories of training. Ratings included not important, slightly important, moderately important, important, and very important. Between two and 13 training topics were listed for each of the categories. After respondents identified the level of importance of the topics within each category, they were asked to provide specific comments about any of the trainings within the category and identify any additional topics related to the category for which there was an immediate need for training. This was a lengthy process for the recipients to complete.

The next set of questions asked recipients about the population of their transit service area (between 0–5,000, 5,001–25,000, 25,001–50,000, and 50,001–200,000), if they thought there was a need for more training in rural and small urban areas, their top three operational challenges, their top three administrative challenges, and if they had taken an NTI course. They were then asked to provide any additional comments. The survey format provided ample opportunities for recipients to provide comments throughout the entire survey.

The survey was reviewed by the National Transit Institute staff and went through the Institutional Review Board process at North Dakota State University before being administered via email. The first email survey was sent October 10 to 1,610 agencies with a deadline for completion of October 26. A reminder email was sent 12 days after the first email. There were nearly 400 responses, but not all the responses were useable. For example, the first question about the importance of safety and oversight training had responses from 342 participants, but not all these respondents completed the entire survey. Some questions have a high response level, e.g., 342, while several of the questions have a lower response of 314 respondents. Considering the fluctuation in the responses, the response rate is between 19.5% and 21%, which is quite good for an email survey.

3.   RESULTS

The results are organized by first presenting the responses for the levels of importance for the 53 trainings within the seven categories: safety and oversight, planning and the environment, demonstration and innovation, procurement, civil rights, program management, and budget and policy. Within each category, a synopsis of the open-ended comments by the participants is included. These comments are condensed by providing a synopsis of the miscellaneous statements, and by listing the immediate training needs, as appropriate.

3.1   Safety and Oversight

NTI currently offers 13 courses in safety and oversight. Based on survey responses, this area of study created the most interest. There were 343 participants who completed this question. The levels of importance were combined to include not important and slightly important, moderately important, and important and very important.

As identified in Table 3.1, five trainings were rated as important or very important by more than 200 participants and would indicate an immediate need (the percent represents the percentage of respondents that selected either important or very important). These top rated were:
1)   Advanced mobility device securement (246/72%)
2)   Developing a transit emergency management plan (233/68%)
3)   All-hazards awareness and preparedness for transit employees (226/66%)
4)   Crisis communication for transit (220/65%)
5)   Harassment prevention for transit (208/61%)

Table 3.1 Importance of Safety and Oversight Training Topics

Topic	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Advanced Mobility Device Securement	44	52	246 (72%)	342
Building Diversity Skills in the Transit Workplace	75	103	164 (48%)	342
Crisis Communication for Transit Employees	42	78	220 (65%)	340
Harassment Prevention for Transit Employees	45	89	208 (61%)	342
Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention	57	89	197 (57%)	343
Musculoskeletal Disorder Awareness and Prevention	130	104	103 (31%)	337
Robbery: Pick Pocket and Identity Theft	165	86	92 (27%)	343
Toolbox for Transit Operator Fatigue: Putting the Report into Action	72	99	172 (50%)	343
Violence in the Transit Workplace Prevention, Response, and Recovery	86	75	182 (53%)	343
All-Hazards Awareness and Preparedness for Transit Employees	42	76	226 (66%)	344
Developing a Transit Emergency Plan	30	80	233 (68%)	343
Assault Awareness and Prevention for Transit Operators	54	91	198 (58%)	343
National Incident Management System	99	121	120 (35%)	340

While participants felt that safety and oversight courses are of great importance, many of the comments indicated that the courses did not specifically pertain to their agency because of the size of their agency, geographic location, or organizational structure. For example, several participants indicated they are part of larger city or county organizations that already provide much of this type of training. Other comments related to how and where these trainings are currently offered. Participants referred to the expense of travel and their concern that most courses are offered only in larger, urban areas.

Participants recommended various immediate topic needs. Some of these topics are already part of current NTI course offerings. There was a clear desire for more frontline-type training for agency staff, including drivers. Other responses indicate that understanding Title VI and ADA policies is an immediate training need.

3.2   Planning and the Environment

NTI currently offers 12 courses in the planning and the environment category. Table 3.2 illustrates the importance of the trainings. The trainings with the greatest immediate need as indicated by ratings of important or very important are: Financial Planning in Transportation, with 217 (68%) respondents; Transportation Planning Process, with 180 (57%) respondents; and Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making, with 168 (53%) respondents. Several of the other trainings were rated by respondents as important, but the top three are recommended for immediate development/modification to offer to rural and small urban transit agencies within the next year.

Table 3.2 Importance of Planning and the Environment Training Topics				
Topic	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Financial Planning in Transportation	44	56	217 (68%)	317
Introduction to Transportation Conformity	101	119	94 (30%)	314
Introduction to Environmental Justice	150	95	70 (22%)	315
Advanced-Level Environmental Justice	162	96	57 (18%)	315
Transportation Planning Process	54	83	180 (57%)	317
Transportation and Land Use	125	101	89 (28%)	315
Public Involvement in Transportation	54	95	168 (53%)	317
State and Metropolitan Transportation	116	87	110 (35%)	313
Managing the Environmental Review	167	98	51 (16%)	316
Transit-Oriented Development	89	89	139 (44%)	317
Performance-Based Planning & Programming	73	83	159 (50%)	315
Ridership Forecasting with STOPS for Transit Project Planning	84	88	146 (46%)	318

Comments on these courses were wide ranging. While there is some importance to the topic, comments tended to indicate there is unfamiliarity with the planning and the environment courses. Participants commented that they did not understand many of the current course offerings, had not heard of the courses, or their agency size was too small for them to offer an opinion.

As with the safety and oversight category, many of the planning and the environment immediate training needs recommended are already covered by current NTI courses. However, participants indicated they would like more courses in planning, funding, growth plans, and transit-oriented development.

3.3   Demonstration and Innovation

NTI currently offers 11 courses in the demonstration and innovation category. Four of those trainings were identified as important or very important by more than 200 respondents. As seen in Table 3.3, the four include Effective Supervision in Transit, with 236 (77%) respondents; Fundamentals of Transit Supervision, with 223 (72%) respondents; Transit Trainers' Workshop, with 219 (70%) respondents; and Project Management for Transit Professionals, with 202 (65%). It is recommended that trainings such as the Transit Trainers' Workshop should be continued but publicized more with rural and small urban agencies.

Comments indicated that participants felt the supervisory courses are important but may not directly pertain to rural agencies. Some of this type of training is offered by other groups (i.e., state RTAPs).

Many of the recommendations for immediate training needs for this category focused on IT and technology-related courses, including CAD, camera systems, social media, and customer communications using emerging technologies.

Table 3.3 Importance of Demonstration and Innovation Training Topics			
Topic	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Senior Leadership	50	65	196 (63%)	311
Transit Trainers' Workshop	37	56	219 (70%)	312
Fundamentals of Transit Supervision	22	66	223 (72%)	311
Effective Supervision in Transit	21	50	236 (77%)	307
Project Management for Transit Professionals	36	72	202 (65%)	310
Leading as a Mid-Manager in Today's Public Transportation	56	76	179 (58%)	311
Transit Academy	75	90	144 (47%)	309
Implementing Rural Transit Technology	52	66	194 (62%)	312
System Engineering for Technology Projects	114	102	94 (30%)	310
Using Regional ITS Architecture	132	93	83 (27%)	308
Introduction to Transit Service Planning	67	83	161 (52%)	311

3.4   Procurement

NTI currently offers two courses in procurement. Participants identified both current courses as important/very important, as seen in Table 3.4. It is recommended that both topics be presented in a timely manner to rural and small urban agencies.

Table 3.4 Importance of Procurement Training Topics				
	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Procurement for Small and Medium Transit Systems	39	48	209 (71%)	296
Bus Procurement Workshop	77	58	173 (56%)	308

The most notable comment from participants indicated that their procurement process was handled outside of the agency. Most stated that "the state" is responsible for their procurement activities. Other comments indicated that the current courses fill up too fast, and that a rural procurement offering would be welcome.

Immediate training needs in procurement included Buy America requirements, procuring technology, development of equipment specs, and procurement relating to triennial reviews.

3.5 Civil Rights

NTI currently offers six courses in civil rights. Participants identified four of the current courses as the most important, as seen in Table 3.5. They are Understanding ADA (263/84%), Title VI and Public Transit (239/76%), Paratransit Management and Operations (217/70%), and Comprehensive ADA Paratransit (202/65%).

Relative to these courses, participants commented that much of their civil rights training is provided by their state DOT. Some comments referred to the necessary training differences between ADA complementary paratransit services and demand-response services. Overall, policy compliance was listed as a significant factor.

Although few immediate trainings were offered, updating them annually was indicated to be important. Disadvantaged business enterprises, unconscious bias, and workplace civility were suggested as possible future course topics.

Table 3.5 Importance of Civil Rights Training Topics				
Topic	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Understanding ADA	15	35	263 (84%)	313
Paratransit Management and Operations	47	48	217 (70%)	312
Title VI and Public Transit	22	52	239 (76%)	313
Comprehensive ADA Paratransit	59	50	202 (65%)	311
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	80	84	149 (48%)	313
Transit Fare Policy	58	90	165 (53%)	313

3.6   Program Management

NTI currently offers five courses in program management. Courses with the highest levels of importance for rural and small urban agencies are Quality Assurance and Quality Control in Transit (206/67%) and Managing Community Mobility (191/62%) (Table 3.6).

Comments about these courses were very limited. Participants stated that they do not typically work with these topics or do so infrequently. The few that commented found the technical assistance from their state DOT and FTA to be adequate without more in-depth training. Program management immediate training needs included land use and transit, construction management, FTA real estate requirements, and success stories (case studies).

Table 3.6 Importance of Program Management Training Topics				
Topic	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Managing Community Mobility	48	70	191 (62%)	309
Quality Assurance and Quality Control in Transit	36	66	206 (67%)	308
Management of Transit Construction Projects	126	89	93 (30%)	308
Risk Assessment for Transit Capital	108	95	106 (34%)	309
FTA Real Estate Requirements	153	85	71 (23%)	309

3.7 Budget and Policy

NTI currently offers four courses in budget and policy. Table 7 reveals the topics with the greatest level of importance to participants. They are: Introduction to Transit Asset Management (169/56%) and National Transit Database (155/51%) (Table 3.7).

This area of study produced very few comments. Comments indicated that these courses are important, but do not relate as much to smaller agencies and are probably more appropriate as topics of training or technical assistance from the state DOT. The only comment submitted for an immediate training need is a course to develop a fully allocated cost model that adheres to the eligibility of utilizing federal funds for operations.

Table 3.7 Importance of Budget and Policy Training Topics				
Topic	Not/Slightly Important	Moderately Important	Important/Very Important	N
Using the Transit Economic Requirements Model (TERM Lite) Analysis Tool	133	88	81 (27%)	302
National Transit Database	76	70	155 (51%)	301
National Transit Database Online Module	88	67	148 (49%)	303
Introduction to Transit Asset Management	55	78	169 (56%)	302

3.8 Agency Information

The population service area of the agencies responding to this survey is provided in Table 3.8. There is a good representation of rural and small urban with 199 rural and 95 small urban transit agencies responding to the survey.

Table 3.8 Respondents by Transit Service Population, N= 294	
Transit Service Area Population	Number
0–5,000	39
5,001–25,000	92
25,001–50,000	68
50,001–200,000	95

Respondents were asked if there was a need for more training to be offered to rural and small urban transit agencies. Of the 314 agencies responding to this question, 81% replied, "Yes, there was a need for them to receive more training." Of those completing the survey, 142 reported that they had completed an NTI course while 157 reported they had not completed one.

3.9   Respondents—Trainings Most Needed

One question asked respondents to identify (type in) which trainings were most needed. This question created 139 individual responses with many of the topic suggestions being trainings already offered by NTI. However, a large number of the most-needed trainings were driver-, operator-, and frontline-focused. Emerging themes included customer service, FTA compliance, personnel management, defensive driving and funding-related trainings. Appendix A contains all of the comments written by respondents regarding "what training is needed most."

3.10   Top Operational Challenges

The top three operational challenges identified by each respondent can be categorized within three areas: funding, workforce, and rolling stock. The subtopics of each are:
- Funding issues (sustainable, local match, operational, capital, securing)
- Workforce issues (shortage, recruiting, hiring, retaining, training, succession)
- Rolling stock issues (maintenance, training, procurement, replacement)

A full listing of the comments received is located in Appendix B.

3.11   Top Administrative Challenges

A summary of the top three administrative challenges to small urban and rural transit providers includes: state and federal reporting (mandates, regulations, financial); time management for supervisors (wearing too many hats, not enough time); and managing human resources. A full listing of the comments received is located in Appendix C.

Appendix D contains a list of any additional comments the respondents provided regarding trainings that NTI should provide. Many of the suggestions relate to trainings that NTI already offers, so there is a need to provide information on the trainings to more locations, such as the state associations and state departments of transportation.

4.   RECOMMENDATIONS

The wealth of information respondents provided to this training needs survey makes it clear that rural and small urban agencies see a need and have a desire for more training topics. Topics from each of the seven categories of training areas need to be addressed to meet the training needs of rural and small urban providers. It is recommended that, as soon as possible, NTI prioritize and address the training topics identified in the survey by at least 200 respondents and have a high percentage of respondents rating the topic as important/very important. In a couple of instances, there are trainings listed that do not have 200 respondents indicating a need for the training; however, more than 50% of the respondents rate them as important/very important.

The ability to modify each of the trainings to meet the needs of rural and small urban providers will need to be considered as some courses may be easier and take less time to modify.

For the seven training categories, the trainings with the greatest identified need (those rated in the important/very important category) are listed below; they identify the number of respondents followed by the percentage of respondents identifying the category as important/very important.

Safety and oversight
- Advanced mobility device securement (246/72%)
- Developing a transit emergency management plan (233/65%)
- All-hazards awareness and preparedness for transit employees (226/66%)
- Crisis communication for transit (220/65%)
- Harassment prevention for transit (208/61%)

Planning and the environment
- Financial Planning in Transportation (217/68%)
- Transportation Planning Process (180/57%)
- Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making (168/53%)

Demonstration and innovation
- Effective Supervision in Transit (236/77%)
- Fundamentals of Transit Supervision (223/72%)
- Transit Trainers' Workshop (219/70%)
- Project Management for Transit Professionals (202/65%)

Procurement
- Procurement for Small and Medium Transit Systems (209/71%)
- Bus Procurement Workshop (173/56%)

Civil rights
- Understanding ADA (263/84%)
- Title VI and Public Transit (239/76%)
- Paratransit Management and Operations (217/70%)
- Comprehensive ADA Paratransit (202/65%)

Program management
- Quality Assurance and Quality Control in Transit (206/67%)
- Managing Community Mobility (191/62%)

Budget and policy
- Introduction to Transit Asset Management (169/56%)

When considering the open-ended questions, the type and depth of the training desired directly related to the size of the agency. The 58.2% of rural respondents (from populations of 50,000 or less) indicated their issues of greatest concern are primarily focused on FTA/state/local compliance, funding operations, and people (staff). Many comments related to the current focus on urban public transportation safety and planning and reporting issues, and not on the day-to-day operational issues of the small and very small rural systems.

The respondents also indicated there is some concern over the logistics of the courses currently offered. The following summarizes some of those comments:
- Classes fill too fast
- Courses are only offered at conferences
- Courses are only offered in large urban centers
- Small agencies cannot afford the travel expenses to attend
- Time, limited staff, and money are the biggest training hurdles

To address some of these concerns, there were many requests for NTI to offer some sort of "distance learning" program or platform.

Given the high number of trainings recommended by respondents to be developed but were already offered by NTI, there is a need to continue and expand communication with those who can let rural and small urban providers know about the trainings. The groups that may best target the rural audiences are the state transit associations and the transit departments at each state department of transportation.

APPENDIX A. OPEN-ENDED RESPONSES FOR THE QUESTION— WHAT TRAINING IS MOST NEEDED?

ADA, Environmental Justice, Diversity

Planning, Safety and Operational

ITS options Mobility device securement Call management options

Marketing, ridership, funds.

Please see answers above.

Driver training, passenger sensitivity and driver fatigue.

Safety and to prevent litigation

Training for drivers

Ones dealing with ridership issues including ADA.

It's hard to get beyond mandatory training to offer additional job/personal development courses (having staffing and budget to cover so that staff can attend training) Supervisory/management development

1. Creating and managing customer expectations 2. personal safety, especially body mechanics

ADA issues, Trolley / Bus safety and Maintenance issues

Financial

Financial training and connecting it to our State system.

Crisis Management, De-escalation techniques

Dispatching, driver safety, funding.

Advanced Mobility Device Securement; Crisis Communication; Financial Planning in Transit

I don't know

Wheel Chair,

More hands-on training for drivers

Dealing with rural populations without diversity.

Transportation planning

Customer service

Procurement, ADA, NTD, Operator Safety

Excellence in Customer Service, Even When You Can't Give Them the Perfect Solution; Bringing People into Planning; Developing Relationships with Private Funders in the Community;

Several of the courses need to be oriented towards smaller operators. I have been to classes in the past where I felt that the information would be more useful with a staff of 20 or more as opposed to a staff of 3 (my agency and several other small agencies don't have huge staff to separate duties).

Showing the value of rural transit to elected officials (who fund the service). ADA training, as the regulations are often misunderstood How to deal with unruly passengers

Asset Management, Grant Procurement Training

Driver safety related trainings

More driver training - fatigued and distracted driving More training on policies

Federal funding process and compliance.

FTA rules and regs; procurement; planning and route analysis/prediction; safety; ADA;

Travel training geared for rural.

Customer service procurement PASS train the trainer

Driver training in ADA, how to deal with verbal and physical threats anything that is easily available for drivers who are not able to travel out of town.

Disaster Transportation. Active Shooter training. Terrorism Training.

Training in writing grants, compliance, and vehicle maintenance

Operations Service design

Train the Trainer; Senior Leadership; Effective Supervision & Project Management

I would love to see a heart or CPR class or emergency training for our drivers and all staff. What to do in an emergency.

Management and operations training such as conformity and fundamentals. Employee training on mental health and interpersonal communication.

Transit 101 management - due to high turn-overs transit financing - CFR 200 regulations & bookkeeping practices Drug & Alcohol record keeping DBE reporting

The above courses would be excellent

Defensive Driving, ADA, Customer Service and HIPPA, Dispatching

Required annual driver training

Advanced procurement training and those focused on long-range planning.

Wheelchair securement ADA (what we can and cannot do) Title VI for small rural areas Success plans

First time Operations Supervisor Training

Overall basic training, a more in-depth of the programs.

Grant Administration and working with service providers.

ADA, FTA rules & Procedures, NTD, TAM

All trainings. More often. Online. We have ample money for training but cannot find the courses we need to improve the skills of our employees.

Driver quality and improvement Management continuing education Webinars are very effective for me - not having to send staff long distances and also, they can stop and go back in a webinar when they hit a point or something that they don't understand.

Transit Planning and Supervision of Transit Employees

Training in the fine art of driving such a large vehicle in traffic.

Safety and security, managing difficult passengers, creating public-private   partnerships,

Drivers training, vehicle inspection training, customer service training

Attracting qualified candidates to hire, Safety retraining for transit vehicle operators, customer service relating to passengers,

Safety, technology, and funding.

Procurement Train the Trainer for new hires Implementing Technology for efficiency

All of them,

procurement, dbe, civil rights

Training that is, specifically, designed for rural operators. It seems like, when we attend training, they are all geared toward urban operators, and their circumstances are much different than rural.

Negotiating union contracts!! Private investment and advertising for revenue Management best practices

I mentioned several above.

PASS training for operators and trainers. ADA training for operators and managers. Training in general, preferably online as most small rural operations have little budget for training and no budget for travel to obtain training.

Planning Procurement Maintenance Management

Grant workshops for assisting rural agencies to write more competitive grants to qualify for more funds.

Compliance with all the guidelines that are required in the 21 Certifications and Assurances is overwhelming as it is. Add to this the availability of DBEs or resources to address Title VI and LEP compliance specifically. Even meeting the testing requirements for drug and alcohol compliant testing sites and times is a challenge as well. Add FMCSA guidelines to the mix.

APPENDIX B. RESPONSES FOR TOP OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Sustainable Funding, Marketing Resources, Productivity

Adequate communication systems Passengers to miles ratio

Planning Scheduling Technology

Staffing shortage

Having adequate and timely bus parts for maintenance and repair Having an adequate bus cdl driver pool Adequate funding level for Tribal Transit operations

ALDOT administer the state transit programs funded by the FTA.

Staffing Staffing Staffing

funding, finding drivers in a rural area.

Not enough buses to be able to go where we need to go.

Funding, adequate, qualified drivers

Getting the information out about services. Riders who do not want to follow our rules Having enough money to provide services

Funding, finding qualified drivers and community involvement

Money Advertising Training

Employee trainings/staff meetings, increased trip denials, not enough vehicles or employees

Driver recruitment, especially weekends

Funding, winter accessible vehicles (all-wheel drive vans), distance traveled between stops, finding drivers willing to work for low pay

1. Having enough staff to cover my ridership. We are the third largest Rural ridership department in the United States. 2. Competitive salaries and benefits for drivers 3. Keeping equipment up to professional standards.

Funding Lack of Capital and capital match Human capital

Ridership Trainings Dollars

Time and funds to provide all the needed training

Staffing. Aging fleet. Transit software.

Providing services to all areas of the county Providing nights & weekend services Turnover among drivers

Educating users how system operates, quality dispatching, hiring.

Rising cost in demand for services; securing additional funding (non-FTA); regulations by DOT, FTA, Insurance, etc.

Indiana has chosen to fund only capital with 5310. As a 5310 recipient, we are required to coordinate, but the restrictions within the 5311 program make it difficult to do so. Having a large (six county) rural service area makes it difficult to operate efficiently and avoid denials. We also have limited backup vehicles in each county so managing maintenance is challenging.

Lack of cooperation between small urban and rural systems personnel shortages keeping up with continuing wage increases (minimum wage changes)

Hiring drivers

The perception of what public transit should and shouldn't do, trying to cover community needs and wants with limitations, finding drivers

1. Not enough funding 2. Lack of political support for transit 3. Competition from TNCs for transit services

Commitments lack of drivers older population

DISTANCE, EFFICIENCY, AND FUNDING

Finding qualified drivers Keeping qualified drivers

As a rural Transit operator, I am often challenged with marketing and education of service availability. The ability to raise local funding. The availability of drivers.

Ongoing operational funds

High frequency service, transit prioritization (priority lighting), higher demand for demand response service

1) funding, 2) attracting a sufficient number of qualified Bus Operators that can live in and/or commute to our expensive service area, and 30 proposed statewide electrification of public transportation.

Small staff training (time and personnel)

Thinking outside the box, Finding contractors to even bid on things, Fuel and Insurance costs

Match funding/Cost per ride/Fleet maintenance

Security, Quality Control, and Transit Operator Fatigue

1- Long distances to hospital/surgery facilities, avg 100 -150 miles one way. 2- Bad road conditions on these long drives (winter driving) 3-Trying to get multiple clients to multiple places at the same time, as we only have one driver on duty at one time, except when we have out of town trips.

Distance between riders

Finding drivers, funding long distance trips with few passengers, retaining drivers

Not enough staff to manage programs, manage a senior center and transportation program(s) and work long hours. More networking and collaboration

Finding qualified drivers Staffing all hours of operation Salaries

Cost control in a contract operations environment. Strategies to stop decreasing ridership. Rolling Stock and capital replacement.

Small volunteer networks to meet demand response needs Lack of critical mass to justify traditional transit service models Development patterns are space and sprawling

Replacing vehicles, increasing demands in the rural area

Recruitment and retention Training Evolving to changing technologies (fare collection, mobility as a service, etc.)

Hiring new mechanics and drivers HR

Affordable communication radio systems in vehicles. Working and reliable lift on older vehicle with less than 50,000 miles. (We do have it inspected regularly more than 1x a year).

1. Funding 2. Personnel: Finding & retaining qualified CDL drivers 3. Vehicle replacement

1. Having a reliable transit driver. 2. Maintenance of transit vehicle. 3. Providing routes the public needs.

Being able to get most or all of the employees trained as having a large group of employees trained at the same time is a challenge, Train the trainer programs work the best as the employee can train on a continual basis at their home transit agency.

Safety Security Supervisor Training

Finding and keeping qualified drivers; Vendors who produce quality cutaway buses; Fleet replacement needs/funding

Hiring and keeping good help. too low of pay. no benefits.

Employees interactions with different types of people and keeping them motivated to stay in rural transit.

Changes in Non-Emergency Medicaid Transportation in New York State, difficulties in attracting drivers, reduced ridership.

1. Matching funds 2. Uncertain future federal and state budgets 3. recruiting quality employees

Funding Staffing CDL

1) Demographic 2)

ridership funding drivers

Money hours of service coverage is spread out over a large unpopulated area.

Low population density prevents fixed route service to outlying, remote towns in the county from operating effectively, particularly in the face of limited financial resources.

Long distance medical that meets the needs and challenges for an aging population NEMT Medicaid transportation as dictated by an insurance provider

Finding drivers and dispatchers, qualified mechanics

Driver recruitment and retention, scheduling, asset management

Our system is operated by a third-party vendor.

Finding quality drivers in a rural area. Keeping up with the demand for service on limited hours. Getting funding to replace vehicles more often.

Hiring and retaining good (especially part time) employees funding issues

Capacity of the demand response routes. Scheduling special needs routes, idle time of the drivers and communication with dispatch.

Hiring drivers. We operate with such a skeleton crew it is hard to do office work and get out with drivers. such a large geographical area ...

1. Not having enough money to provide more services to the community 2. Being able to conduct the required drug and alcohol testing 3. Being a rural county being able to coordinate more trips

Paratransit scheduling efficiency, reduced funding and increased traffic congestion

1. Getting the drivers scheduled for the off-site training provided and yet maintain services. 2. Instilling a sense of pride in their job 3. Getting financial resources for new vehicles in an economically strapped region

1. Safety; 2. Training; 3. Equipment

Sustainable funding sources

More volume more info to the public more financial assistance

Time, Drivers, and funding.

Funding availability; the need for expanding SSTAP services; ADA services

Public Awareness of services available and costs involved in riding public transit. Not owning our own building and leasing. (Current building has leaking roof and mold issues)

Funding, Wait times & personnel

Coordination of services between different types of service providers - We are an intercity bus route service provider and not a small transit company.

1. Maintaining strong ridership. 2. Maintaining reasonable fares. 3. Dealing with impacts to our system caused by closure of a private system that had provided transportation for those who have specialized transportation needs.

Maintaining employment of drivers and mechanics operator safety

1.Keeping the vans in good working condition 2. Replacing vans 3. Providing service in such a wide rural area-lots of miles on the vans

Budget to increase service areas Monies for new buses or facility updates

Recruiting Drivers

Funding and Financial Attracting employees and retaining them Public opinion and relations

funding, funding, and funding

Rolling stock maintenance and repairs, properly trained bus drivers, and more paratransit vehicles.

Finding good employees Affordable and effective training programs Balancing a growing need for specialized transportation with a limited budget.

serving people with only 2 small buses on a very limited budget the need for local qualified lift mechanics revenue

Distance to and ridership in outlying areas. Finding qualified drivers Communication dead spots

Our rural county has a high senior and disabled population. Fares box revenue not enough to sustain the system. Require higher grant funding awards to assist in maintaining current routes and schedules.

Hiring enough qualified staff. Complying with federal guidelines and reporting requirements. Understanding ITS possibilities that could improve service to customers being affordable to rural agencies.

APPENDIX C. RESPONSES FOR TOP ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES

Trying to get funding to move out into Lincoln County.

Timetracking Staffing Seasonal employment

Maintain operating levels with funding cuts from Tribal Transit

ALDOT administer the state transit programs funded by the FTA.

Communication Organizational Behavior

Few staff members having to address all mandates and planning as well as day-to-day operations, meeting state-mandated farebox ratios, being perceived by the community as a last choice commute option

Marketing

Working with MPO for equitable decision making amongst the multiple transit providers

Same as above

Money Good Employees Training

Keeping up with training programs because of small staff

1. Staff levels 2. Equipment issues 3. Funding issues

Dollars Training Time

Money, employees or the lack of employees, keeping up with benefits that compare to other employers

Succession planning. Board of Director engagement. Keeping P&P updated.

Having to wear all the hats at one time and finding time to do programs that really don't do anything for small transits

Lack of local matching funds Small number of employees and a large number of federal regulations covering many different specializations Grant activities are performed by several different City departments and coordination between these departments is often non-existent

Hiring qualified drivers

The introduction of brokers for Medicaid and Managed Care have changed our operations significantly; moving us from great customer service and directly scheduling trips for clients over the phone to having an administrative staff member monitoring four different portals and constantly going back-and-forth between the brokers and clients. We have difficulty recruiting and/or retaining drivers and office staff and always seem to get caught up in the day-to-day, making it difficult to analyze data and plan strategically.

We are very rural (trying to attract qualified administrators) keeping up with all the state and federal reporting time management

having enough drivers and having enough driving to keep enough drivers

1. Limited staffing resources 2. Limited support from executive management 3. Too many Federal and State regulations that have to be administered for a small agency

Money bookwork doing diversity training

DISTANCE, EFFICIENCY, AND FUNDING

Funding Updating fleet

Turnover, maintaining competitive wage rates, complexity of coordinated service arrangement

Staffing for ADA, technology, and FTA reporting

Attracting/retaining qualified candidates is our primary administrative challenge. I would say training is a challenge, but we participate in a good transit indemnity pool that provides on-site operations-based safety training programs.

Funding finding relief drivers cost of bus repairs

See above.

Having resources & information (training) to better manage transit business Information on obtaining additional funding/grants Growth and managing funding

Competitive wages Fluctuation of ridership throughout the year Time management

Funding

Headcount Managing the business maintaining a state of good repair for vehicles (trains) and Facilities

I've been working on policies to help define procedures, protocols, etc... it seems never ending and some are redundant and I'm constantly updating, refining, it seems.

Funding, funding, and funding

Many federal requirements are very burdensome for a small system with limited staff, especially new asset management requirements and triennial reviews

Funding, funding & funding.

Succession planning funding grant compliance

Staffing challenges with quality drivers that can work part-time for low wages. Continuous education for drivers - sometimes the little things that are constant reminders.

1. Accessible training 2. Software/Hardware: scheduling, tracking, passenger notification, financial, payment options, 3. Personnel

1. Having a reliable driver. 2. Having a reliable back up driver. 3. Providing a consistent public transit service.

1. Maintaining costs 2. Finding drivers 3. Learning new state and federal regulations and compliance actions

As rural and LARGE urban operator, locating capital and operating funds for local fixed route services.

Wearing too many hats and not having enough time to do administrative work because of running the operating side of the business.

Conformity and collaboration between rural transits to provide a network of transportation.

Working with a dysfunctional NYSDOT Public Transportation Bureau, dealing with frivolous accusations of discrimination and compliance violations from a single individual, not knowing how to complete capital projects to the satisfaction of NYSDOT and the FTA.

1. BOD turnover 2. State DOT turnover 3. Reimbursement process

Funding Staffing

1) Funding 2)

Medicaid billing available drivers rude customers

Staffing limited medical service

Understaffed administrative personnel hampers time availability for long-term projects. Few potential drivers are available in the local labor pool making hiring efforts difficult. Most major funding sources are being fully utilized making further needed service expansion fiscally improbable.

As we grow having enough staff to maintain the reporting and affording scheduling software. NCDOT will not help fund our software but the do for large systems that transport 300 trips or more. We are at the tipping point of 275.

Raising match money, grant writing

Mid-level manager supervision, budget forecasting, reporting (PTN-128)

Staying on top of required paperwork for all involved

Maintaining/securing dedicated funding Mining data to create reports - knowing what info to use and how to use it Effectively marketing the system

Technology, bus repair costs, driver retention with short shifts

Having to wear too many hats; marketing and public relations, financial, HR, regulatory.....

Funding, community support

Financial Management, Performance Measures and Oversight of Third-Party Operators

1. HR development over a great distance; 2. Technology implementation 3. Training sessions

HR budget compliance

Qualified employees maintenance volume

Again time, Getting drivers to work during down time., Employee wages.

Funding availability; providing training; route coverage (lack of employees)

Hiring driver's that already have a CDL and passenger endorsement. DOT driver pre-trip and driving test at testing facilities is geared toward big truck/bus vs smaller transit 18 passenger vehicles.

Same as above.

Regulations written for Urban Audits DBE

Constant turnover at our State DOT Employee Hire and Retention Our Local NCDOT requiring projects that are Not FTA required that pull management away from customer focus.

Hiring and employee retention, securing local match funding, reporting

Keeping track of all federal requirements, procurement, labor relations

1. Finding time to do the reports that are required. 2. Maintaining the bus fleet 3. Securing funds for operation

Human resources hiring and firing Union contracts bargaining and grievances Training new drivers to obtain CDL

Succession, funding, red tape

Educating/training staff; financial planning, service planning

Finding creative ways to fund operations. Finding ways to promote transit travel within our town and to other locations. Getting people to understand that we have a viable bus system.

Grants are increasingly more complicated requiring we hire consultants to write. The time and cost associated with administering grants and reporting requirements Public records requests

Lack of communication from the state decline of matching funds on the state level isolation from other transit providers

1) meeting ever changing federal and state requirements 2) meeting never ending additional state/federal requirements 3) federal project programing across agencies (FHWA/FTA/DOT)

APPENDIX D. LIST ANY TRAINING TOPICS THAT ARE NOT BEING OFFERED BY NTI THAT WOULD HELP MEET THE NEEDS OF RURAL AND SMALL URBAN TRANSIT AGENCIES

N/A

All training topics are being provided.

Innovative service planning and cost modeling

Policy and Procedures

Human Resources - Hiring/Coaching/Terminating (Most small agencies don't have HR staff) Succession Planning - Times are changing and small agencies need to prepare for the future

NONE

Wheelchair/mobility device securement

Keeping positive in a negative world Knowing our limits for enforcing policy with riders. What is encouraged and what is law.

NA

In a general sense, "how to run a small transit operation".

How best to maximize grant dollars

Training for Bus Maintenance Personnel and/or Supervisors

?

Operations Service design safety

Several NTI courses are being offered that would be helpful. Costs to attend the courses is oftentimes an issue

UNSURE

Introduction to Transit Management-Over the years I have seen numerous systems go through turnover where the top 2-3 people leave and the system has an absolute vacuum of knowledge and how to do things. An intro course like this would at least give first time Transit Managers a template on what needs to be done vs. trying to figure it out on their own.

Not sure what NTI all offers

NTI is too URBAN so some sessions are too involved for small urban

Circular training

Most of the training topics that are mentioned above meet the need of our transit agency for now.

FTA regulations

Basic administration to be in compliance with Certifications and Assurances.