

## IMPACTS OF TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE

Lack of available transportation to healthcare destinations can have a significant impact on both individuals seeking treatment and the healthcare system economy. In the past year, both the National Center for Mobility Management (NCMM) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) produced reports that aim to highlight the potential effects associated with people missing medical appointments because they did not have access to transportation. These reports reveal the importance of providing appropriate transportation options to and from healthcare facilities and provide discussion about activities to improve access to and from these facilities.

In the reports produced by NCMM and FTA's partner, Health Outreach Partners (HOP), lack of transportation is identified as a significant barrier to healthcare access. The research reviewed in these reports does not provide an exact percentage of the population that cannot access healthcare facilities due to a lack of transportation, but it does frequently cite lack of transportation as a common theme for why people miss or postpone medical appointments and procedures. An older study cited in the HOP report, and other related research, estimates that roughly 3.6 million Americans miss at least one medical appointment each year as a result of not having transportation.

In a survey conducted by HOP, 41% of the 188 health centers that were surveyed indicated that lack of transportation was a top barrier for patients coming to scheduled appointments.

According to the reports, missing scheduled medical appointments often leads to poorer health outcomes for patients and additional costs to healthcare systems. For individuals, missing an appointment means less time with a physician and increased likelihood of a condition worsening. Missed appointments mean doctors do not have the opportunity to appropriately monitor a condition or adjust a treatment plan. Without a strong patient-doctor relationship, doctors are also unable to identify lifestyle choices that may be negatively impacting a person's health.

In regard to the incurred costs to the healthcare system, the two reports indicate that millions of dollars are lost each year due to missed appointments. When patients are not able to make it to scheduled appointments, any time or resources spent on preparing for the patient can no longer be billed. As the number of missed appointments grows, healthcare systems can experience more and more lost revenue. In the HOP's survey, respondents estimated that missed appointments cost the health centers anywhere from \$50 to \$350 per missed appointment. This additional cost not only affects the healthcare provider, but it can also affect the general public as medical coverage costs may increase to take into account recovery of lost revenue.



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# NOTES FROM THE TOP

BY MICHELLE HORNE

Where has the summer gone? The Public Transportation Staff has been busy processing end of the year payments, conducting our annual Directors' meetings, hosting STTARS trainings, and preparing for our annual conference. The Directors' meetings were very successful, offering technical assistance and updates on FTA programs, annual compliance reviews, the Administrative Handbook, audit requirements, vehicle specifications, DBE, Title VI, accident reporting, Internal Control questionnaires, and operating and capital requirements. And it's looking like the fall is going to be just as busy.

The 2017 Louisiana Public Transportation Conference is scheduled for November 6th-8th in Shreveport, Louisiana at the Shreveport Convention Center. The conference is an excellent learning experience and networking opportunity for transit leaders. This year's theme is "Think Big". The conference will include a pre-conference 8-hour workshop on Office of Management and Budget (OMB) SuperCircular – 2 CFR 200 on Monday, November 6th at 8:00 am. All transit agencies receiving operating assistance and the Metropolitan Planning Organizations are invited to attend the pre-conference workshop at no additional charge. Conference sessions will include transit updates; program compliance; asset management; Self-Driving Buses; Zero-Emissions; provider roundtables; application review for Rural, JARC, and Elderly and Disabled programs; and Triennial Review for the Urban Transit Systems.

For more information, please visit our website at: [http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov/Inside\\_LaDOTD/Divisions/Multimodal/transit/Pages/default.aspx](http://wwwsp.dotd.la.gov/Inside_LaDOTD/Divisions/Multimodal/transit/Pages/default.aspx)

To register for the conference, please visit: <https://www.regonline.com/registration/Checkin.aspx?EventID=2020036>

Looking forward, we have several upcoming training opportunities for transit agencies. STTARS Trainings, Defensive Driving courses, and computer classes are being offered monthly. We also have a Compliance Report training scheduled for October to review and answer questions you may have on the Annual Compliance Review questionnaire due November 1st. In addition to our annual conference in November, most of the DOTD Public Transportation staff will be attending the TSI Transit Bus System Safety certification program. In December, we have scheduled an Application Training to provide technical assistance to transit providers and potential applicants applying for funding through our Louisiana Transit Electronic Application Management (LA-TEAM) System. Be sure to check the training calendar for details and register early to ensure a seat in the trainings.

Special thanks to our transit providers for participating in the emergency evacuation and transportation to the shelters during and after Hurricane Harvey. Our prayers are with all who were affected.

Thanks for your continued support of the public transportation mission in Louisiana. If there is any specific training that you need or want DOTD to sponsor, please contact me or Keycha Green. We look forward to seeing you all at the 2017 Public Transportation Conference in Shreveport!



LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT

Public Transportation Staff  
phone: 225-379-3060 | fax: 225-379-3071  
publictransportation@la.gov  
www.dotd.la.gov

Michelle Horne  
Director

Jamie Ainsworth  
Assistant Director

Casey Lewis  
Urban Program Manager/Planner

Tina Athalone  
Elderly & Disabled Capital Program  
Manager

Stephanie Barthelemy  
Rural Public Transit/JARC Program  
Manager

Keycha Alexander-Green  
Training & Technical Assistance  
Program Manager

Karen Harris  
Elderly & Disabled Operating Program  
Manager

Juanita Crowell  
Safety & Security Program Manager

Melissa Cormier  
Rural Public Transit Assistant Program  
Manager

Warren Morgan  
Elderly & Disabled Assistant Program  
Manager

Keri LaBaue  
Accountant

Rita M. Gobert  
Administrative Assistant

# ANNOUNCEMENTS & EVENTS

Register for the 2017  
LA Public Transit  
Conference [HERE!](#)



## LPTA EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [www.lptaonline.org](http://www.lptaonline.org)

NOV. 6 - 8

Louisiana Public Transit Conference..... Shreveport, LA

## FTA EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: <https://cms.fta.dot.gov>

OCT. 29 - NOV. 1

National RTAP Technical Assistance Conference..... Omaha, NE

## APTA EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [www.apta.com](http://www.apta.com)

OCT. 8 - 11

APTA Annual Meeting..... Atlanta, GA

OCT. 9 - 11

APTA EXPO..... Atlanta, GA

DEC. 4 - 7

Mid-Year Safety Seminar..... Houston, TX

## NATIONAL TRANSIT INSTITUTE COURSES

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [www.ntionline.com](http://www.ntionline.com)

OCT. 4 - 5

National Transit Database (Urban Reporting)..... Louisville, KY

## TRB EVENTS

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT: [www.trb.org](http://www.trb.org)

JAN. 7 - 11, 2018

97th Annual Meeting..... Washington, D.C.



# SPOTLIGHT ON...

## TECHNOLOGY AND TRANSIT (PART 5) | CELLULAR COMMUNICATIONS REDUCE AGENCY'S COSTS

The Siouxland Regional Transit System (SRTS) of Iowa is currently leading the way in switching from land mobile radio (LMR) to cellular communications. In its initial phases, the “push-to-talk-over-cellular” technology upgrade has saved the agency thousands of dollars in typical expenditures and improved both the efficiency and safety of its services.

Prior to the switch to cellular communications, SRTS rented space from a trunking system and used an assortment of different radio models to facilitate communication between dispatchers and bus drivers. The system was difficult to maintain and was reaching the end of its useful lifespan, costing SRTS an estimated \$35,000 per year for installation, repairs, and tower rent.

SRTS facilitates transit service for multiple counties, serving over 200,000 citizens in the region, including specialized service for the elderly, disabled, and those with low-income. Since the majority of SRTS service operates in a rural environment, the coverage of the radio system was often unreliable. Additionally, drivers had to handle the equipment while driving, potentially leading to safety issues. As a result, SRTS Transit Director Curt Miller began to design a new communications system based on cellular service and real-time phone and streaming applications.



Initially, SRTS installed tablet computers within its entire 60-bus fleet and synced cellular phones for all dispatchers. At the time, SRTS already had dispatch software implemented which created a seamless transition. Miller then identified a cellular application compatible for both tablet and phone which allowed dispatchers to communicate with drivers in groups categorized by county, as opposed to communicating with the entire fleet. To improve safety and eliminate the need for drivers to handle the tablet while driving, Miller added remote, push-to-talk mics synced to the fleet tablets. The mics are designed to be attached to a hands-free environment for the drivers. The wireless mics also allow drivers to stay in communication while assisting riders outside of the bus.

Overall, the updated cellular communication system has reduced costs by nearly 70%. LMR rent had been costing the agency \$2,500 a month, while the new system only costs about \$360 a month. Not only have costs been significantly reduced, but communications coverage from the new service has increased, and drivers are now able to work in a safer atmosphere.

Miller also plans to install in-vehicle router units on all buses that will allow SRTS to use its tablets on wireless internet instead of typical cellular service (e.g. Verizon), further decreasing communications costs. The router unit not only provides better signal, but it allows for live video streaming from on-board cameras and provides free Wi-Fi to passengers.

# DOTD ON THE GO...



One of the DOTD PT Section's mandates is to provide information and technical assistance to transit providers in Louisiana in order to assist them in meeting their requirements for FTA funding. These activities come in many different formats and venues. DOTD PT provides numerous training courses, workshops, and training materials, as well as a website and an annual conference. To keep all of our constituents up to date on DOTD PT's activities, DOTD On The Go features just a few selected items each quarter.

## SITE VISITS

Part of the outreach and assistance that LADOTD provides to the Rural Public Transportation (Section 5311) and Elderly and Disabled (Section 5310) providers are site visits from the program managers. In the last quarter, LADOTD visited the following 5310 & 5311 providers: Winn COA, Webster COA, Lincoln COA, Evergreen Life, Zachary Foundation, Richland, Avoyelles Parish, Webster Parish, Claiborne Parish, Beauregard Parish, DeSoto Parish, and Rapides Parish.

## OUTREACH

To further the goal of providing some form of public transportation in all 64 parishes, as listed in the Louisiana Vision 2020 Plan, LADOTD has been conducting educational visits to all the parishes in Louisiana that do not currently have some form of public transit service. Last quarter LADOTD completed outreach for the following parishes: West Baton Rouge, West Carroll, Winn, and Lafourche.

## TRAINING

DOTD staff provided five STARS trainings at DOTD offices and hosted two Directors' Meetings in Baton Rouge and one in Natchitoches in July. DOTD also conducted preventative maintenance training in New Orleans, as well as defensive driving training and computer classes.

*If your agency or someone within your agency deserves recognition for a job well done, or has already received recognition or an award, please let us know. Email or send a brief description, photos, and contact information to [Michelle.Horne@la.gov](mailto:Michelle.Horne@la.gov) or to Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development/Public Transit Section, attn: Michelle Horne, P.O. Box 94245, Baton Rouge, LA 70804.*

Besides revenue lost, there are additional costs that are generated by the increased use of the emergency health services. The NCMM report notes that those with certain conditions who miss appointments are more likely to be hospitalized, and if patients cannot receive necessary preventative or follow-up treatment, it is assumed that use of the emergency department is more likely. Emergency health service is estimated to be 15 times more expensive than a typical appointment with a physician. Another potential cost to healthcare providers highlighted in the report is the cost of occupied hospital beds for patients that could be discharged. If patients are unable to get home when they are ready to be discharged, hospitals may have to keep a patient overnight

or use their limited resources to provide transportation.

The report is careful to note that it is difficult to estimate the exact amount of costs resulting from missed appointments that can be directly associated with transportation issues. However, since lack of transportation is such a big barrier to healthcare, the reports do show that it is reasonable to assume that a large portion of these costs can be attributed to lack of transportation. In other words, when people do not have adequate transportation to reach scheduled medical appointments, substantial costs are incurred by the patient, the general public, and healthcare systems overall.

Public transit—as a major mode of transportation for many—plays a

critical role in the health outcomes of the community and potential cost impacts to healthcare systems. Research presented in the reports revealed that those who used public transit were more likely to miss appointments than those with cars. On a per person basis, this means that those who take public transit are more likely to have poorer health outcomes and generate additional costs to their healthcare providers, because it is more difficult for them to attend scheduled appointments.

The full NCMM report can be found [HERE](#) and the full HOP report can be found [HERE](#).

Next quarter's newsletter will discuss opportunities and strategies for providers to improve transportation services to healthcare facilities.

## FROM CAPITOL HILL...

In July, the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Federal Transit Administration (FTA) released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) regarding private sector investment for public transportation capital projects. The proposal aims to create a streamlined FTA regulatory and permit approval process for public-private partnerships (P3s) and private investment in public transportation. The new rule, known as Private Investment Project Procedures (PIPP), will allow Federal funding recipients to identify regulations or guidance that are barriers to the use of P3s or private investments and apply for a modification or waiver of identified FTA requirements. The goal of the new rule is to encourage private investment in public transit services spanning project planning, development, finance, design, construction, maintenance, and operations.

In order to obtain waivers, transit providers must prove that the FTA regulations in place discourage or prevent private sector investment for a project. Following waiver submittal, the FTA Administrator has discretion to grant a waiver or modification to FTA requirements upon reviewing a given transit agency's proposal.

While the program allows some regulatory lenience, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements or any other Federal transit statutes are not eligible to be waived or modified. The FTA is currently accepting public comment on the proposed rule until September 29, 2017.

The NPRM can be found here:

[https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/07/31/2017-15985/private-investment-project-procedures?utm\\_campaign=subscription%20mailing%20list&utm\\_source=federalregister.gov&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/07/31/2017-15985/private-investment-project-procedures?utm_campaign=subscription%20mailing%20list&utm_source=federalregister.gov&utm_medium=email)

