



# Bus Rodeo Toolkit



Created in 2014

# Welcome

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## Bus Rodeo Toolkit

Welcome to the Bus Rodeo Toolkit. This online toolkit and video were created to help transit agencies, transit associations, non-profit social services agencies, and state Departments of Transportation (DOT) plan for and implement a bus rodeo and ensure consistent judging of contestants as they travel through the obstacle course. A bus rodeo is great for teambuilding, improving morale, and promoting safety. It also enables drivers to show their skills and network with other people in the transit industry, and may result in your drivers competing at the national level.

The Connecticut Rodeo was used as the model in the development of this toolkit. If you are a small operator and only want to conduct a bus rodeo with your drivers, you could review sections of the toolkit to determine the information you need for a successful event.

National RTAP staff would like to thank the following work group members listed below (all current or recent Review Board members) as well as Connecticut DOT, CT Transit, Arizona DOT, James Holman, North Carolina DOT, North Carolina Transit Association, American Public Transportation Association and the Community Transportation Association of America, whose expertise and experience helped shape the development of this toolkit:

- Dan Harrigan, Arizona DOT
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- Louis Friend, Chickaloon Native Village, Chickaloon, AK
- Chris Kleehammer, Southeast Tennessee Human Resource Agency, Dunlap TN
- Ryan Marshall, Cedar City, Cedar City, UT
- Tracy Young, Arizona DOT

## Toolkit Contents

The toolkit has been divided into three sections: Work Group, Tasks and Budget. We have also included a video, “Bus Rodeo Basics,” that was filmed during the rodeo held in Connecticut on June 9, 2013. You can view the video in its entirety or by segment. The video provides

details on set-up and judging of ten common obstacles and other non-obstacle course items that the contestant is judged on. For each obstacle presented, you will view the obstacle design, how to judge the obstacle, and scoring a contestant. Your drivers may also find value in viewing the video to better understand the obstacles and how the contestants are judged and scored. In addition, we have created an [Excel file](#) that can be used to compile the driver score sheets at an event.

To view the topics that are included in each section of the toolkit, please see the table of contents in the left toolbar. If you would like a PDF or printed version of the content or the Bus Rodeo Basics video on a DVD, you can order it through the [National RTAP Resource Library](#) or contact us at [info@nationalrtap.org](mailto:info@nationalrtap.org).

## **Work Group**

You can't do it alone. Depending on the size of your bus rodeo, there are a number of tasks that have to be completed in advance of the rodeo and you will need help. It's best to have a work group who oversees sub-work groups. For example, a member of the main work group would oversee judging and have a sub-work group who registers judges, assigns locations, train judges, creates judging packets, etc. The main working group should decide on a timeline for the tasks, schedule of meetings (pre-and post-rodeo), and location.

The next section on Tasks will help you decide what you need for work and sub-work groups. Members of the working group can be staff from the transit agency or agencies, transit associations, state DOT staff, non-profit social service agencies and/or other interested parties. You also need to select a person to be the Course Marshal or the person in charge of the rodeo-day of the event activities. After the event, the working group should have a wrap-up meeting to review the event and make recommendations for improvements.

## **Tasks**

There are a number of tasks that need to be accomplished pre-, during, and post-rodeo. A comprehensive list of tasks is provided below. However, not all tasks may be relevant to the type of bus rodeo you are conducting. Within the list of tasks are downloadable pdf or Excel files that you can save to your computer and/or print for your own usage. The list provided below is not in any priority order and is a suggested list. Your agency may decide to pick and choose what tasks need to be completed in order to have a successful bus rodeo.

## **Marketing and Recruitment**

Communication with transit agencies – It's not a rodeo without contestants. You have to communicate with the various transit agencies whose drivers may want to participate in the event. This initial communication can be sent via email or regular mail and should include information about the event, timelines, registration information, eligibility information and posters to be displayed at the transit agency to inform drivers, potential judges and volunteers about the event and event deadlines. This should be initiated about two and half months before the event. Of course it does not stop after the initial announcement. You will be sending reminders to make sure you receive a good representation of drivers. To make the process more efficient, a main contact person at the transit agency should be designated to ensure clear communication between the working group and the transit agency.

Enlisting judges – The ideal situation is to have at least one experienced judge and a less experienced judge at each obstacle with a few back-up people in case judges do not show up on the day of the event. Judges could be DOT staff, staff from the transit association, transit agency staff and other volunteers such as staff from human service and non-profit agencies. Sponsorships – A great way of reducing costs is to have sponsors provide in-kind services or financial assistance. There are a number of items listed in the budget that could be paid for or provided in-kind by a sponsor. For example, your local department of public works may have barrels and traffic cones that could be used on the obstacle course. Another example

is the local police, state police or sheriff's department volunteering to provide a safety/community liaison officer with a speed detection device. Prizes for contestants and winners – The giveaway items could include baseball caps, shirts or some other item to commemorate the day and plaques for the winners. Securing equipment - This group would also be tasked with securing equipment such as transit vehicles, computer equipment, tent, chairs and tables. A full list of items to have on hand is [listed here](#).

## Registration

Participant eligibility standards – You will want to make sure your eligibility standards meet the standards of the national rodeo (APTA and CTAA) so that the winners are able to compete in those events:

- [APTA](#)
- [CTAA](#)

The eligibility standards should be included in the initial mailings to the participating transit agencies and as part of the registration form. [Click here for a list of suggested eligibility criteria](#).

Develop mechanism to register – An online registration process is the most convenient way to register drivers, judges and volunteers. This will also make it easier to build the database of contestants, judges and volunteers. You can do this using a free online survey application like Google Forms, SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang or Surveygizmo. Ultimately, you will be downloading the information into a spreadsheet or word document to create lists of contestants, start times, judge assignments, name tags, etc. It may be more convenient if you have the transit agency's main contact complete the registration form for each driver. [For a list of items to be included in the registration forms click here](#). Registration fee – In some states a registration fee is charged. In the case of Connecticut, contestants were charged a registration fee of \$75. A guide to estimating the registration fee could be approximately 10 percent of the overall rodeo budget. The toolkit includes a budget sheet that will help estimate a registration fee if your organization decides to charge one. [Click here for the budget sheet](#). Assign starting times – The spreadsheet created during registration can be used to help assign starting times. Ideally, there should be three vehicles on the course at one time in order to move things along. A typical course takes about 7 minutes to complete. Releasing vehicles every 5 minutes should be adequate. [Click here for starting time sheets](#). Check in judges on the day of the event – The registration spreadsheet can be used to create name tags, assign judges to obstacles and help check judges in on the day of event. The judges should be at the event at least one hour before the event so that they can check in, receive instructions for judging and familiarize themselves with the specific obstacle and the overall course. This will also give the person overseeing the judges time to fill-in positions if judges do not show up. When judges check in, they should receive a safety vest, a judge's packet and, if available, a commemorative item (e.g., baseball cap/shirt). [Click here for a list of information to be included in the judges and contestant packet](#). A sample of the Connecticut Guide for Contestants and Judges is available [here](#). Check in contestants on the day of the event – As with the judges, the spreadsheet created during registration can be used to check the contestants in and provide name tags. At check-in, contestants are assigned their starting times and provided a contestant's packet. Contestants should also arrive at least one hour before the event regardless of their starting time. If they do not register an hour before the event they may be scratched. In most cases, transit agencies are allowed to have one alternate contestant.

## The Course

Secure course location – It is important to secure the location for the event well in advance of the event. Once you have secured the location you will be able to develop the course specifications. Typical locations have included Park and Ride lots, large parking areas at conference centers, industrial parks, sports arenas and municipal parking lots. At the Connecticut rodeo, a Park and Ride lot was used. This lot measured 333' by 195' or

approximately 65,000 sf, for the cutaway vehicle category. You will also need space for automobile parking and spectator area. You may want to get a Special Event Liability policy to cover your agency.

**Develop course specifications** – This toolkit includes a rough layout of a course with [10 obstacles](#). Actual location and sequence of obstacles will depend on the dimensions of the lot. You will have to decide which obstacles are to be used and the sequence of how the obstacles are to be laid out. To assist with the layout of each obstacle, the North Carolina DOT and North Carolina Transit Association provided us with measurements for each obstacle. [Click here for the measurement sheets](#). We suggest laying out the course in advance of the event in case adjustments are needed and to test timing. In laying out the course you will need one vehicle, approximately twelve cones, a can of spray paint and a tape measure. Set up each obstacle starting at the beginning of the course. Once the obstacle is set-up, spray the corners of each cone so that cones can be placed on the day of the event and then move on to the next obstacle. In some cases, the course is set-up one day in advance. This will depend on the availability of the location. Completing the course set-up on the day before the event will make the day of the event much easier and enable you to have a day of practice. **Secure equipment for obstacles** – We have provided a suggested list of equipment you will need to build a course of 10 obstacles as shown in the rough layout referenced above. [Click here for a list of equipment and other items you will need](#). **Set-up course** – As recommended in this toolkit, you will find setting up the course the day before the event will make the day of the event run smoother. In the case of Connecticut, Saturday was set-up and practice day. Transit agencies were assigned 30-minute segments for practice. Some locations may choose to not have the drivers practice or see the course until the day of the event. In any case it may be wise to have security at the location overnight to prevent drivers walking or driving the course and just for security reasons so that none of the equipment is removed.

## Vehicles

**Secure and inspect vehicles** – Vehicles are typically provided by the transit agency(ies). The working group should check to see if additional vehicle insurance is needed because non-transit agency employees will be driving the vehicles. The vehicles will need to be inspected to ensure all vehicles are in good working order. Inspection of the vehicles should occur the day before or early on the day of the event. Depending on the number of contestants and whether you will have contestants conduct a vehicle inspection, you will need three to four vehicles for each vehicle category- three vehicles for the competition and one spare vehicle. Try to get similar makes and models of vehicles.

## Judging

**Register judges** – Registering judges is covered in the registration section of this toolkit. You may want to have a committee specific to judging. While another committee may be doing registration, the Judging committee can monitor registration to ensure that there are enough judges and back-up judges. Each obstacle needs two judges. The registration information will also help with assigning judges to their locations based on the information provided during registration.

### Assign locations

– A rule of thumb is to have at least one judge per obstacle with judging experience and the second judge with less or no experience. The experienced judge can guide the less-experienced second judge. There are two types of judges:

- **On-Board Judge** – As the title implies, this judge is in the vehicle with the driver. The judge is the timekeeper, and determines the degree of professional appearance, smoothness of operations and on-board safety habits.
- **Course Judge** – This judge is assigned to the obstacle course and is responsible for judging the contestant from the completion of the previous obstacle to the completion of the obstacle they are judging and providing a score sheet for each contestant.



Training – The judge's packet provides information about judging. In addition, a walk-through of the course obstacles is also necessary. In Connecticut two techniques were used. The first technique had a trainer walk all of the judges through each obstacle before the competition started. This approach showed the judges the whole course, as well as an individual obstacle. However, this can also be confusing because some of the judges may not hear everything the trainer is stating and may miss the details of judging their assigned location. The second training technique had the trainer come to each obstacle and instruct the two judges assigned to that obstacle. We found the latter to be more effective as long as there is enough time to do the individual instructions.

### Judging packet

– This packet should include a map of the course, general instructions about the role of the judge and scoring sheets for the obstacle to be judged by the person. Connecticut provided a combination guide for the contestants and the judges so that everyone would be familiar with the rodeo event, the course layout, rules of conduct and scoring. [Click here to view a list of items that should be part of the judges packet.](#)

### Scoring

– It is very important that judges are consistent when scoring contestants and provide an objective evaluation of a contestant's performance. Listed below are some general rules of thumb and ten obstacles with instructions on how to score each obstacle. Some of the information listed below is taken verbatim, shown in italics, from the Connecticut guidelines. The scoring sheets are also from Connecticut:

- General guidelines – The sheets listed below show the preferred locations of where the judges should be standing. It is important that the judge does not interfere with the contestant's ability to complete the obstacle. Judges must mark on the scoring sheet which barrels, balls, cones or curbs are hit or touched ("hit") by the vehicle. A hit occurs when any part of the vehicle (e.g. body, bumper and tire) comes in contact with the barrels, balls, etc. A contestant is not penalized a second time if they hit the same barrel, cone or curb more than once. Judges must reset the barrels, balls, etc. once the contestant has cleared the obstacle. If a cone is stuck under the vehicle, the judge must stop the vehicle and remove the cone. The on-board judge must stop the clock while the cone(s) is removed and start the clock again once the contestant may proceed. If the obstacle does not require a vehicle stop, but the contestant stops, the clock continues to run. [Click here to download the judges scoring templates.](#) For scoring templates that are not numbered, [click here for the PDF](#), or [download the Word version](#).
- Serpentine – Tests the contestant's ability to maneuver turns. The cones that are most likely to be hit are the two entrance cones, the point and the pivot cones. Contestants are likely to stop and shift in reverse, so you must remember to check to see if cones are hit when the vehicle is traveling backwards.
- Offset Street – Tests the contestant's ability to drive through two separate narrow lanes that are offset one full lane. Judges should be careful to watch the last cone in the entrance set on the driver's side. This cone is likely to be hit as the rear of the vehicle swings through the turn. Watch the entrance cones on the second set for bumper contact, and watch the tires of the bus as they pass by the base of the cones.
- Right Turn - Tests the contestant's ability to maneuver a 90-degree right turn. Note the location of the right, outside rear tire as it crosses the 45-degree line from the pivot cone. This is the point at which you must decide which interval the tire has crossed. If any portion of the line marking the next 6" increment on the 45-degree line is visible as the tire crosses the 45-degree line, penalty points are earned. The cones most likely to be hit are the driver's side entrance cone (tail swing), the pivot cone and the exit cones. A turn signal is required.

- Right and Left Hand Reverse – Both of these obstacles test the contestant's ability to simulate a bus backing up between two objects. The vehicle must come to a stop so that the judges can determine where the rear bumper of the vehicle is with respect to the rear marker cone. The contestant must sound the horn to signal the judges that the backing maneuver is complete and it is safe to measure the distance from the rear of the vehicle to the rear marker cone. The timekeeper must stop the clock when the contestant sounds the horn, and start the clock when signaled to do so by the judge by a slap on the side of the vehicle. Judges should determine the location quickly. All contestants and judges should note that the marking cones have different point values. These obstacles are likely to result in a cone lodged between the tires and the body. Be ready to alert the contestant to stop the vehicle if necessary. Judges must remember to watch the vehicle as it departs the obstacle because points are deducted for cones that are hit while exiting the obstacle, keeping in mind the cone can only be hit once. Emergency flashers are required.
- Right Rear Tire Clearance – Tests the contestant's ability to drive through a lane with the right front and rear dual tires. Judges may need to crouch down to see if tennis balls are being hit. It makes no difference if the tennis balls are hit by the front or rear tires. Once a ball is hit, points are lost. As with the cones, tennis balls can be hit only once. Keep in mind that the tennis balls have varying point values. If a hit tennis ball rolls into another ball, the judges must use their judgment to determine if that ball would have been hit by the tire anyway. Again, be consistent.
- Passenger Stop – Tests the contestant's ability to make a passenger stop at a bus stop. Consistency in measurement is vital to this exercise. Measure the distance from the top edge of the curb, to the center of the tire below the axle at the same height as the top of the curb. (If you use a tape or other line, measure the distance at the pavement level.) Be sure that the yard stick is perpendicular to the curb when you measure. Measurements are rounded up. If you measure 8-1/4" or 8-3/4", it should be recorded as 9" on the score sheet. Hitting the curb or cones anytime, either entering or departing the stop, loses points, so be careful to watch the cones and curb as the vehicle departs the obstacle. The contestant must open the front passenger door to indicate to the judges that it is safe to measure the distance between the curb and the tires. The timekeeper must stop the clock when the door is open, and restart the clock when signaled to do so by the judges by a slap on the side of the vehicle. Turn signals are required when entering and exiting the passenger stop.
- Left Turn – Tests the contestant's ability to maneuver a 90-degree left turn. The two entry cones are the ones most likely to be hit. Remember, they each have a 25-point value. Watch for the right entry cone being hit by the tail swing of the vehicle. Turn signal is required.
- Diminishing Clearance – Tests the contestant's ability to judge position and speed of the vehicle. In this obstacle, the vehicle must travel at least 20 mph. The radar display, not the vehicle speedometer, is the official speed measurement device, so judges must watch the display. The vehicle can reach this speed at any point before entering, or while in the exercise. Judges should be careful to stand away from the barrels. They travel fast when hit at 20 mph. In Connecticut a safety officer was present with radar equipment and signaled to the judge that the contestant achieved 20 mph.
- Judgment Stop – Tests the contestant's ability to judge stopping distance between the bus and a small object, in this case a cone, directly ahead. In measuring the distance between the cone and the front bumper of the vehicle, it is very important to be consistent in your measurements. Measure the distance from the cone to the bumper by placing the yardstick on top of the cone, with the 1" increments on the yardstick starting at the end toward the vehicle. The yardstick should be kept parallel to the ground (level), and perpendicular to the front of the vehicle. Read the distance where the yardstick crosses the outside of the cone. Measurements are rounded up. If you measure 8-1/4" or

8-3/4", it should be recorded as 9" on the score sheet.

- Safety Habits – The on-board judge will note contestant's use of turn signals, 4-way flashers and sounding of horn while completing a number of obstacles.
- Smoothness of Operation and Safety Habits – The on-board judge will determine if the contestant makes any sudden starts, stops or abrupt turns, and will indicate whether contestants wear their seat belt/shoulder harness while driving the course. The judge should be consistent in scoring all contestants.
- Time Penalty – The timekeeper (who is also the on-board judge) starts the clock when the vehicle is put in motion at the start line. The clock is stopped when the vehicle comes to a stop at the right- and left-turn reverse obstacles and the passenger stop, and started again when signaled to do so by the judges (by a slap on the side of the bus). The clock is stopped when the vehicle come to a final stop at the judgment stop.
- Personal Appearance – In the case of the Connecticut rodeo, drivers were required to wear their uniforms and were judged on their professional appearance. Items judged included wrinkled uniforms, unkempt personal appearance, and unpolished or dirty shoes. It is up to the rodeo organizers whether to include this as part of the event.
- Other exercises – Your event may also include a safety quiz, pre-trip vehicle inspection and wheelchair securement. These exercises were not included in the Connecticut rodeo.
- Safety Quiz – A written quiz can be administered before the driver starts the obstacle course and used to test the contestant's knowledge of the rules and regulations for a professional vehicle driver.
- Pre-Trip Vehicle Inspection – All drivers must conduct a pre-inspection of their vehicle before they start their day of service. This exercise could be part of the rodeo contest. The vehicle could be set-up with a few defects to test how thorough the driver is with inspecting the vehicle.
- Wheelchair Securement – This is a test of the driver's ability to use lift equipment, secure a wheelchair and provide customer service. The driver should approach the passenger as though the passenger were a person to be transported and take the steps needed to get the passenger on the vehicle and secure the passenger and wheelchair.

## **Determining the Winner(s)**

Collecting the score sheets – a process should be set-up to collect the score sheets and compile the scores. In the case of Connecticut, a volunteer was used to collect the score sheets. The volunteer used a golf cart type of vehicle to follow the contestant, collect the score sheets and deliver the sheets to the recorder location. In Arizona, volunteers would walk around the course collecting the score sheets. Compiling the score – The recorder should tally the obstacle and non-obstacle score sheets for each driver. A second person could be used to recheck all scores for accuracy. National RTAP has provided an [Excel spreadsheet](#) that could be used to tabulate the scores. The Excel spreadsheet was created so that if there is a tie, the tie could be settled by choosing the contestant who completed the course in the shortest time.

## **Grievance Procedures**

The work group should have a grievance sub-committee to establish procedures in the event a contestant requests a hearing. The process could consist of hearing the contestant's concerns, questioning of the contestant by the subcommittee, discussion between the sub-committee members and a final decision.



## **Food/Entertainment/Awards**

Determine number of attendees – The attendees include drivers, judges, volunteers, guests, etc. This will help when determining the amount of food and beverages, as well as seating, tables, portable toilets, etc. that will be needed.

Determine types of food, beverages and distribution – There are a few options for food such as a bag lunch or barbecue. Make sure there is plenty of water on hand, especially if the weather is predicted to be warm and sunny. It gets very hot on the course during the event. Decide if you are going to provide breakfast and lunch. In some cases, rodeos are held during regional conferences and the food and beverages could be incorporated into the overall conference items. At conferences an awards dinner is typically held as well.

Determine number of awards – Beyond the 1st place winners you may want to provide something for 2nd and 3rd place, best time, rookie award, youngest driver, perfect score at pre-determined difficult obstacles, etc.

Obtain awards – Decide on the type of award(s): plaques that can be added to each year, trophies, printed awards, etc. It's a good idea to obtain the awards before the rodeo so that you can present the awards during the awards ceremony and then update the information on the award after the event. Paper awards could be printed at the event.

Plan and implement awards ceremony – determine what you want to do for the awards ceremony. If it is a standalone event, the awards ceremony could happen after lunch. At a regional conference an awards dinner could be held.

## **Event Clean-up**

For smaller venues, clean-up will be done by the volunteers and judges. If you have rented equipment you will want to let your vendors know what time to come to pick-up the equipment so that staff do not have to wait around for the vendor(s) to arrive. If you rent tents, have the vendor include installation and removal as part of the price. If the food vendor provides tables and chairs have them include set-up and removal as part of the price.

## **Material and Supplies**

For a suggested list of items that you will need for the rodeo event download this [Materials and Supplies List](#).

## **Develop a Budget**

There are a number of items that you will want to include in your budget. See this suggested [List of Budget Items](#) to help you get started. If you are using federal funds to help fund the rodeo, remember that you have federal requirements for procuring items. See the [Procurement section](#) of National RTAP's Transit Manager's Toolkit for more information.

Good luck and have fun! If you have questions as you plan your rodeo, contact us at [info@nationalrtap.org](mailto:info@nationalrtap.org) or 888-589-6821.

## **Bus Rodeo Basics Video**

Visit the [Bus Rodeo Basics Video](#) page and view the video in its entirety or by segment. This video provides details on how to set-up and judge ten common obstacles and other non-obstacle course items that the contestant is judged on.

## **Additional Resources**

[Suggest A Topic](#)