

Rural Transit Day Chat July 16, 2025

Summary

The nation's sixth [#RuralTransitDay](#) Chat on July 16, 2025 took place on Facebook Live and was moderated by Stephanie Lewis of Florida RTAP, Stephanie Bushong of Ketchikan Gateway Borough, and John Andoh from Redding Area Bus Authority. Many organizations also posted on other social media platforms, including X, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

The chat focused on what agencies are doing to recognize passengers and staff on Rural Transit Day and throughout the year, and included a discussion about challenges, solutions, and best practices. There were over 2,289 impressions (many more if you include the Photo Contest “Prequel” on X) from the chat and over 25 individuals and organizations participated.

Participants included the following organizations:

- Bucks County Transport
- DJ Transit
- Florida RTAP
- Fort Bend Transit
- Georgia DOT
- Ketchikan Gateway Borough
- Lux Ride Pro
- National Center for Rural Road Safety
- Redding Area Bus Authority
- San Jose State University
- Southern Connect South Mississippi
- Steuben County, NY
- Transit Happy
- Transit Workforce Center (TWC)
- Tri-CAP Transit Connection

The chat began with sharing of what organizations and transit agencies were doing this year to celebrate Rural Transit Day:

- The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, who operate Kayak Public Transit, Published a Proclamation of Rural Transit Day
- Oneida Public Transit provides free rides, having a raffle for riders who take a picture with a driver, fill out a survey, or post a photo of the bus on Facebook
- Valley County Transit is celebrating both its 50th Anniversary and Rural Transit Day with a BBQ
- Valley Metro published an English/Spanish post inviting riders to tell them how rural transit has affected their lives

- COTA is hosting a 5K run to celebrate Rural Transit Day
- NCRTD designed a cool QR code to gather community input on what rural transit means to people.
- Reagan Mass Transit District is holding an open house.
- Governor Mike Dunleavy [proclaimed](#) Rural Transit Day for Alaska.
- The Kaua'i Bus is sharing community stories on its website and social media, highlighting the positive impact rural transit has on the lives of Kaua'i residents
- Jasper County Community Services is having a celebration with music, free items, and free transportation
- Open Plains Transit, Victor Valley Transit, Mountain Transit, Basin Transit, Needles Area Transit, Tri-Valley's T.H.E. Bus, and Morongo Basin Transit Authority are giving free rides

Many training resources and best practices were shared, and there were also fun moments.

- July 16 is Snakes, Spinach, Guinea Pigs & Rural Transit! This [video](#) used the music of Summer Madness · Kool & The Gang
- Ceres Liner Bus in the Philippines created a video with a [song](#) for Rural Transit Day – Rural Transit Day and Night
- A poll was shared about the participants' favorite rural transit destination. It was almost unanimously the beach!
- Participants were asked to guess how many items were in the Rural Transit Day Time Capsule. The first person who got the closest won. Stephanie Lewis from Florida RTAP won a Rural Transit Day t-shirt.

Visit the [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) videos for questions asked during the chat and attendees' replies. We also have a Rural Transit Day [news page](#) with more information about the special day. Answers to chat questions are provided below.

Question 1: What's one thing you wish more people understood about the importance of rural transit?

Answers:

- For many rural community members, it is the only way they can get to work, school, medical care, etc.
- "Rural transit is not just about transportation, it's about access to opportunity," answered Tara Franklin, San Jose State University student completing her summer fieldwork at National RTAP. "For many rural residents, it's the only way to reach healthcare, employment, education, and essential services. Without it, entire populations can become isolated, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and those without cars."
- Patricia Smith, Transit Program Manager at Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) wishes that people understood that rural transit provides the opportunity for citizens of Georgia to have access to medical, shopping, and other needs.
- One thing Jaime Sullivan, Director for the National Center for Rural Road Safety wishes more people understood about the importance of rural transit is that not only is it important for

mobility in rural areas, to allow people without access to a car to live their lives the way they want to, but it is also an important safety strategy. On our quest for zero fatalities and serious injuries on our roadways, modal shift from a personal vehicle to transit can have huge benefits. According to APTA's study *The Hidden Traffic Safety Solution: Public Transportation*, public transportation is one of the safest ways to travel and is ten times safer per mile than traveling by car. Additionally, transit decreases congestion, reduces the number of vehicles on the road, and is a way to connect multiple modes of travel.

- Stephanie Bushong of Ketchikan Gateway Borough exclaimed that “not only do we move people and provide access but that we also move the economy!”

Question 2: Tell us about technology that you are using to make the rural transit experience easy for your riders?

Answers:

- Ketchikan Buss utilize technology for real-time arrivals, service adjustments/detours etc. Social Media is also a great way for them to reach visitors to the community that may not have rode before!
- National RTAP's slate of free [technology tools](#) for rural transit providers includes GTFS Builder, Cost Allocation Calculator, ProcurementPRO, Website Builder, RideSheet, and Rural iNTD.
- Tara recommended working to implement mobile booking platforms and real-time vehicle tracking so riders can schedule trips, receive estimated times of arrivals, getting alerts about delays, and using automated scheduling and dispatch software to improve routing efficiency and reduce wait times.
- Statewide scheduling and routing software with access to prepaid farecards and mobile scheduling app for the public are some good ideas from GDOT.

Question 3: Have you considered consolidation for efficiency with other operators?

Answers:

- If you can't consolidate, think about marketing together. Joint marketing relationships like [NW Connector](#) can push promotions out more broadly and help riders explore connections, explained Elea.
- Georgia developed a Statewide Transit Plan in 2020. The goal is to expand transit statewide to all 159 counties. They currently have transit in 130 counties. One of the recommendations of the statewide transit plan included transit development plan statewide.
- Transit agencies should actively explore partnerships and consolidation opportunities with neighboring systems to reduce administrative overhead, align service areas, and improve rider experience. Shared call centers and joint procurement efforts are just a couple of ways they can together for better efficiency, explained Tara.
- If you are considering consolidation or coordination, look to the Transportation Technical Coordination Library. CCAM-TAC has a new [TACL Resources collection](#).

Question 4: If you could design the ideal rural transit vehicle, what features would it have?

Answers:

- Some great ideas from the Jaime: If I could design the ideal rural transit vehicle, it would include features that would address some common challenges faced by rural providers. For example, finding drivers with a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) is often difficult, therefore a vehicle with 14 or fewer seats may make the most sense. Getting warranty work or maintenance done on a rural vehicle can be challenging, and sometimes vehicles have to be towed or trailered for 100 miles or more, so a reliable vehicle is vitally important. Lastly, since rural transit vehicles are usually driving longer distances, good gas mileage (miles per gallon) would be beneficial.
- Tara thinks it would be a smaller, fuel-efficient or electric vehicle with all-weather capabilities, accessible ramps/lifts, flexible seating configurations, Wi-Fi, and real-time GPS. Good features to include would be easy-clean flooring, mobile charging, collision sensors, and driver ergonomics.
- Cara Marcus from National RTAP would like to have large windows to look out at the beautiful rural terrains.

Question 5: How are you addressing the challenges in hiring drivers in this new generation?

Answers:

- At Georgia Department of Transportation, subrecipients participate in job fairs and advertisements. Patricia Smith, Transit Program Manager sent an email blast to their 5311 Transit Agencies to celebrate Rural Transit Day. Some recommendations included the following: Honor your staff with a Transit Hero Card, Honor your riders, Partner with a school, library or recreation department.
- Being more flexible with their personal lives, recommended Rhonda Torgersen from Tri-CAP Transit Connection, Minnesota.
- Being flexible with schedules, suggested Audra Dubble Chantelau from Bucks County Transport in Quakertown, Pennsylvania.
- Elea Carey knows that some agencies have removed the education requirements -- no longer need a high school diploma. But also working to attract high school students early on by speaking to high school classes about employment opportunities in transit.
- Look to the National RTAP Transit Manager Toolkit [section on hiring](#) for some tips. National RTAP is also working on rural driver safety and hours of service.

Question 6: Do you have duplication with other transit operators within your service area? If so, how do you coordinate when it comes to passengers and federal funding splits?

Answers:

- GDOT works with transit agencies to procure vehicles that meet the needs of its systems. The vehicles are purchased through the Department of Administrative Services statewide contract.

Question 7: Other than getting from point A to point B, what other benefits does reliable rural transit bring to a community?

Answers:

- The National Rural Road Safety Center shared that rural transit has been shown to have a benefit to cost ratio of at least 1.5 to 1, meaning that individuals and communities benefit from rural transit. These benefits can include access to social opportunities (e.g. senior center),

healthcare, and employment. And as I mentioned at the beginning of the chat, there is also a safety benefit. A few resources on the benefits of rural transit include Measuring the Economic Benefits of Rural and Small Urban Transit Service in Greater Minnesota and Emerging Technologies and Opportunities for Improved Mobility and Safety for Rural Areas.

- National RTAP Executive Director Robin Phillips exclaimed, “It is available to more people and places than most people know!!” She added that the long hours driven in rural areas to help people stay connected are amazing and difficult.
- Socialization is a benefit of rural transit.
- Benefits include independence for going to work and seniors can be social.
- Rural transit provides jobs for rural residents, said Elea.
- It has the benefits of flexibility, mobility, and the feeling of independence for individuals.
- From Tara: It improves public health, reduces social isolation, supports local economies by connecting workers and shoppers, and can even reduce emergency response costs. Transit also enables aging in place for seniors and supports independence for individuals with disabilities.
- Donna Bailey from DJ Transit said that rural transit builds confidence helping people maintain independence.
- National RTAP has a [Transit Benefits Statistics webpage](#) at where you can find the numbers to tell your story.

Question 8: What other modes are you considering or operating that’s different from traditional fixed route and paratransit and general public dial-a-ride?

Answers:

- Many transit agencies are piloting micro-transit models, volunteer driver programs, and on-demand transit partnerships using app-based ride requests. Some areas also use flexible route deviated services or coordinate with local nonprofits and healthcare providers for specialized trips.
- Rural systems in Georgia do not have fixed routes but offer demand response with deviated route service that accommodates same day service with the scheduling in advance and all of the rural transit vehicles in Georgia are ADA accessible.
- Elea heard that Tuolumne County Transit is considering going all microtransit.
- Integrating biking and walking can help your services reach more destinations, suggested Robin.
- National RTAP hosted a [webinar](#) on Rural Transit Planning and Route Design that can give you some good ideas.

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