State RTAP Manager's Peer Roundtable Summary

January 18, 2022

Our Winter 2022 State RTAP Manager Peer Roundtable was based on questions State RTAP Managers asked within the past year, including discussions during National RTAP/State RTAP 1:1 outreach calls. There were 24 attendees; states that participated were Colorado, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Washington.

Q: In our State RTAP Manager Directory, should we list only one RTAP Manager, or more than one if multiple individuals manage the program?

A: One RTAP Manager had no objections to multiple individuals being listed. Another said that one RTAP Manager being listed was sufficient, while someone else felt that all individuals who manage the RTAP program should be listed. Another recommended listing the job title or role of each person if multiple individuals are listed. It might be helpful to say if the program is run by the State DOT or outsourced. It was decided that the decision will be left up to each state. National RTAP will let primary RTAP Managers know that they can submit additional RTAP Managers (not staff positions, just those at the RTAP program manager level) for our Directory to info@nationalrtap.org.

Q: Does anyone have any suggestions for procuring heavy duty buses over 30 feet long?

A: Iowa DOT does, and Kristen Haar shared their web page about this topic. The benefit of a state performing this is that agencies can select more than one vendor and each transit agency can work with just one procurement, rather than needing to do several of them. Kristin will be able to provide peer assistance to the requestor. Ohio DOT follows a similar model and Jessie Schmitzer will share documents with the RTAP Manager group.

Q: How can you best advise subrecipients about whether or not to go fare-free?
A: New Hampshire RTAP Manager Fred Butler shared the link for the TCRP study: Implementation and Outcomes of Fare-Free Transit Systems, which discussed pros and cons. Island Transit in Washington is a fare-free transit agency that serves the two islands of Whidbey and Camano Islands, which are not connected. The people like being able to go from place to place. Marianna Hanefeld shared the link for the agency as well as their description "Island Transit has been a fare-free bus system since its founding in 1987. You don't need a ticket, cash or coins to ride

the bus, which makes bus transportation a very easy and convenient way to travel around Island County. Just hop on and go. Bus service is funded through 9 tenths of 1% of Island County's local sales tax and supplemented by state and federal grants. So, support public transit and shop local!" Kari Banta from Texas RTAP mentioned that Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) performs research on fare-free models. Jesse brought up how going fare-free can be a challenge for transit agencies in terms of contracts, and it is different going fare-free during the pandemic than it will be after the pandemic is over.

Q: What are you using for asset tracking systems?

A: Ohio DOT uses BlackCat and Iowa DOT is moving to it soon. Colorado (CASTA) uses Salesforce for assets and grant management. Texas DOT is in the process of doing a procurement for a new system but is currently using Salesforce for asset and grants management. South Dakota currently uses Salesforce and has a current procurement out and may move to something else. Washington DOT is using a system developed by Dulles for grant management. Asset management is a part, but not all of it.

Q: Has anyone been providing training on new FMCSA CDL training requirements?

A: Colorado gave a training to a grantee group of steps taken by agencies to prepare for the new ELDT requirements. Some of their agencies are contracting with online providers for EDLT training. They are exploring the options of meeting the requirements. Minnesota uses an interagency shared training model. They are working on a system to provide sharing of training so the trainer can provide training virtually. They have a presentation available and are working on a Behind the Wheel Checklist, that they will be able to share with National RTAP when it is finalized. Iowa gave a recent training where FMCSA presented, which was helpful.

Robin talked about the new ELDT tech brief National RTAP just published and challenges to rural transit agencies with the ELDT requirements.

Q: What state specific training requirements does your state have?

A: Liz Taylor, National RTAP Assistant Director, explained that the 2022 RTAP Manager's Survey has a question about state specific training requirements. Robin commented that New Mexico and Arizona have some state specific requirements and many of their trainings are on eLearning. Ann Rajewski of Colorado said that it may be difficult to figure out what training should potentially be required above and beyond FTA training requirements. She also said that safety training has sometimes been challenging at the agency level.

Q: Has anyone helped grantees develop a transit manager succession plan, or has anyone develop a State RTAP Manager succession plan?

A: New Hampshire RTAP is currently going through a succession; Fred and Cathy Cormier are working together now, and Fred is sharing all he knows with Cathy. Ann said that experts say it's best to document procedures before a succession, because usually it is not possible for the previous manager and the incoming manager to work together.

Q: Are you helping subrecipients to prepare for SMRs?

A: Ann said they get a lot of their feedback about what grantees need for their SMRs from conferences. Sometimes they just need technical assistance, which CASTA provides. Iowa DOT helps SMR reviewers choose agencies who might need to be reviewed. Texas DOT's field staff provides technical assistance when agencies are facing a triennial review. Robin brought up the opportunity for training at quarterly meetings at the regional office, which had different themes. Heath Pickerill from Missouri RTAP said that they haven't gotten these types of technical assistance requests from transit agencies, but it may be a service that they could promote.

Q: What have you found most useful to help you and/or your subrecipients to write RFPs?

A: Cara highlighted National RTAP's ProcurementPRO technology tool. National RTAP also provides procurement assistance through the Transit Manager's Toolkit, including recommendations for competitive proposals. National RTAP will investigate offering additional training on this topic.

Please reach out to info@nationalrtap.org if you would like to suggest any additional topic(s) for our next roundtable, which will be in July 2022.