



FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION

# **COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session #4: Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment**

September 24, 2020

3:15 – 4:30 PM EDT



U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Transit Administration



# Welcome



**Candace Key**

FTA Office of Transit Safety and Oversight  
Director, Office of System Safety

# Welcome



**K. Jane Williams**  
FTA Deputy Administrator

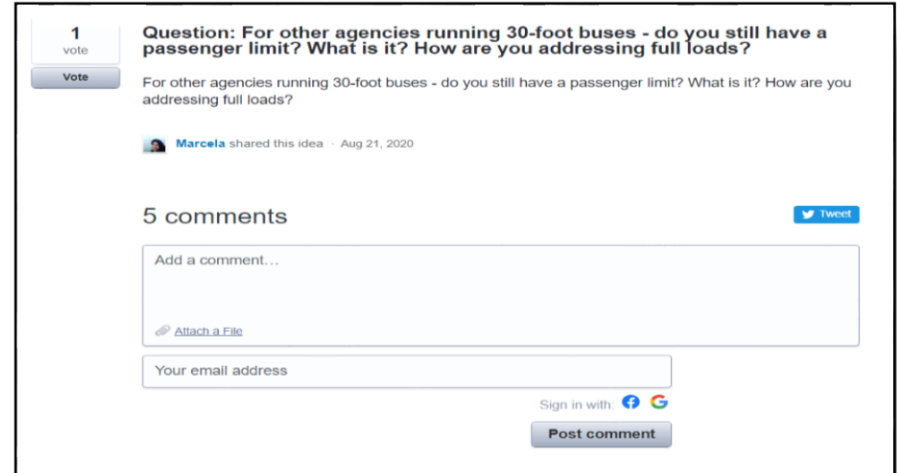
# Welcome



**Matt Welbes**  
FTA Executive Director

# FTA COVID-19 Recovery Listening Session Forum

- Participants can post a question, comment, resource, or idea, or view and respond to other participants' posts.
- This discussion forum provides a platform to complement Listening Sessions and give transit professionals an additional channel to exchange ideas and best practices. Commercial posts are prohibited.



The screenshot shows a forum post interface. At the top, it says '1 vote' with a 'Vote' button. The question is: 'Question: For other agencies running 30-foot buses - do you still have a passenger limit? What is it? How are you addressing full loads?'. Below the question, it says 'For other agencies running 30-foot buses - do you still have a passenger limit? What is it? How are you addressing full loads?'. A user named 'Marcela' is shown sharing this idea on Aug 21, 2020. There are '5 comments' and a 'Tweet' button. Below the comments section is a text input field labeled 'Add a comment...'. There is also an 'Attach a File' button. At the bottom, there is a 'Your email address' input field, a 'Sign in with' button with Facebook and Google icons, and a 'Post comment' button.

**Access the forum from FTA's COVID-19 website or at  
[https://usdot.uservoice.com/forums/930736-fta-covid-19-  
recovery-discussion-forum](https://usdot.uservoice.com/forums/930736-fta-covid-19-recovery-discussion-forum)**

## Poll Question Results (1 of 2)

- Nearly all respondents indicated that their agency has implemented new procedures to support cleaning, disinfection, or ventilation in response to the COVID-19 public health emergency.
  - 82% of respondents said that their agency has utilized new cleaning technologies.
  - 10% of respondents noted that their agency is working to implement these new technologies.
- About 60% of respondents said that their agency disinfects their transit vehicles more than once per day with products that meet the Environmental Protection Agency's criteria for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.
  - 34% of respondents said their agency disinfects its transit vehicles once per day under this protocol.

## Poll Question Results (2 of 2)

- Approximately 42% of respondents indicated that their agency was spending between 1% and 25% of their normal budget on cleaning and disinfecting vehicles and facilities.
  - About 20% of respondents said that their agency was spending between 26% and 50% of their normal budget on this protocol.
  - 10% of respondents indicated that they were spending more than 50% of their normal budget for cleaning protocol.
- One quarter of respondents reported that their agency has utilized the COVID-19 Recovery Vendor List for Public Transportation.
  - Of the respondents whose agencies did utilize the COVID-19 Recovery Vendor List for Public Transportation, nearly all found the list helpful to their agency.

## Transit Agency Panelist



**Patricia Hale**  
Assistant Director  
Athens-Clarke County  
Transit  
Athens, Georgia

Mrs. Patricia Hale currently serves as the Assistant Director of Athens-Clarke County Transit. She is a native of Athens-Clarke County, which is home of the Georgia Bulldogs.

Mrs. Hale joined the transit industry in 1986 and has served in numerous positions.

Mrs. Hale holds a BA, and MBA from Colorado Tech, and is married with five children. Two of her sons serve in the United States Army.



# Agency Characteristics and Services

## Athens-Clarke County Transit

- Serves a population of 127,300 in Athens-Clarke County
  - Coordinates with University of Georgia (UGA) transit system
- Owned and operated by the Athens-Clarke County Unified Government
- Operates a fleet of:
  - 32 fixed route hybrid vehicles
  - 20 routes within a 44-mile radius throughout the county, with complementary para-transit
- Routes service residential areas, downtown, commercial hubs, and the UGA campus
- Recognized as Transportation System of the Year in 2016 by the Community Transportation Association of America



# Impacts of COVID-19

The impacts of COVID-19 on Athens Clarke County Transit:

- Increased marketing using radio and on-board announcements
- Ridership declined by 65%
- Fare-free (no cash accepted due to social distancing)
- Rear boarding for ambulatory passengers, front door boarding for passengers w/ disabilities to increase social distance
- Increase in youth ridership due to school closings and virtual learning
- Increase in staff retirement due to fear and underlying conditions related to COVID-19
- CDC recommendations and mandated policies were implemented for all employees
- CDC information updated weekly for all employees
- Virtual meetings

## **CARES Act funding provided operational dollars which were used to cover:**

Operator protective barriers for entire fleet, including paratransit vehicles

Masks for transit passengers, operators, and marketing events

Cleaning supplies

PPE, gloves, face shields, Tyvek suits

Electrostatic sprayers for disinfecting office and entire fleet

UV lighting to disinfect facilities and equipment

Loss of wages due to service reduction and COVID-19 FMLA

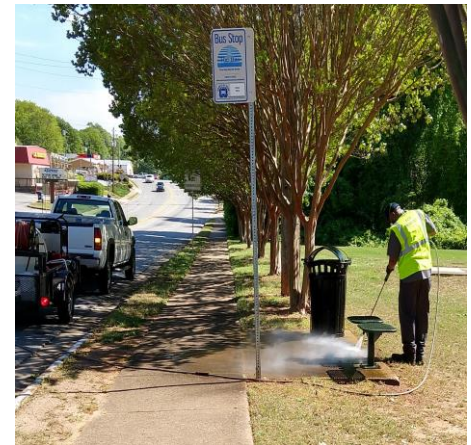
# Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment

## Athens Transit quickly implemented our pandemic plan:

- The plan provided action steps for each employee (ex. Who could work remotely?)
- The plan was broken down into phases based on the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce
- If COVID-19 impacted
  - PHASE I 20% of workforce impacted; 19 vehicles
  - PHASE II 40% of workforce impacted; summer service/ 16 vehicles
  - PHASE III 60% of workforce impacted; weekend service only/8 vehicles
- The plan was disseminated about a month before the crisis began, which reduced the number of phone calls from employees and staff

## Athens Transit continues to:

- Mandate masks when entering facility
- Pressure wash bus stops daily and wipe down vehicles after each trip at the transfer center
- Place hand sanitizer stations on each vehicle



## Transit Agency Panelist



**Phil Scherer**

Chief Facilities/Maintenance Officer  
Kansas City Area Transportation  
Authority  
Kansas City, Missouri

Phil Scherer is the Chief Facilities and Maintenance Officer for the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority (KCATA). He is responsible for maintenance of KCATA's physical asset inventory, including the rolling stock fleet, support vehicles, buildings, grounds and amenities. Phil has been with KCATA since 2001.

# Agency Characteristics and Services

- KCATA is a bi-state agency created by a compact between the States of Missouri and Kansas, and approved by the United States Congress
- Compact gives KCATA responsibility for the seven-county Kansas City metropolitan area

Missouri Counties	Kansas Counties
Cass	Johnson
Clay	Leavenworth
Jackson	Wyandotte
Platte	

- KCATA operates [RideKC bus service](#), the MAX Bus Rapid Transit service, [Flex](#) demand-response routes, [RideKC Freedom](#) paratransit service for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and [RideKC Van](#) vanpool service

# Impacts of COVID-19

- KCATA leadership developed an infectious disease preparedness plan
  - The Incident Management Team is charged with ensuring the safety of KCATA employees and the public by implementing health and safety practices in accordance with CDC guidelines
- Service guidelines were revised to include:
  - Requiring face coverings for operators and passengers
  - Reducing seating capacity on fixed and paratransit services to encourage social distancing
  - Suspending fare collections
  - Requiring fixed transit passengers to use the rear door for boarding

# Impacts of COVID-19

- KCATA received \$51,271,164 of regional funding that was allocated to the regional partners
- KCATA retained \$38,128,712 of this funding to supplement lost revenues, operating expenses, and capital expenses
  - This funding has been incorporated throughout the 2021 budget to anticipate reduced sales tax revenues
- 43% decline in ridership since beginning of April
  - 42,000 daily trips in March → 22,000 daily trips in April
  - Reduced service levels to 60% in response
- Ridership climbed to 26,00 by July, increased service to 80% of normal levels
- Ridership now about 27% below pre-COVID levels.
  - High frequency urban areas have maintained solid ridership

# Impacts of COVID-19

## Vehicle Safety Changes

- Providing hand sanitizer, disinfectant foggers, and PPE for personnel assigned to clean buses
- Providing bus operators with PPE (e.g., face coverings, cloth and disposable masks, safety glasses, hand sanitizer, gloves)
- Safety barriers on buses

## Additional Administrative Changes

- Non-essential staff allowed to work from home
- Office meetings switched to video conference technology
- Employee training using an e-learning platform



# Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment

- Based on expert recommendations, purchased Virex- a product that kills a number of dangerous microorganisms
- Also purchased Electrostatic Sprayers (Clorox 360 Disinfectant Cleaner)
  - Recommended for use against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, based on the EPA's Emerging Viral Pathogen Policy
  - The Electrostatic Sprayer kills 99.9% bacteria in five seconds
- Installed signage on seats encouraging social distancing
- Reduced seating capacity
- Increased touchpoint sanitizing to non-stop treatment throughout the day
  - Deep cleaning using all available products for known exposures
- Emphasizing importance of janitorial staff within the organization
- Exploring and testing other cleaning technologies

## Transit Agency Panelist



**Rob Rosenberg**  
Superintendent, Light Rail  
Vehicle Maintenance  
Valley Metro  
Phoenix, Arizona

Rob Rosenberg is responsible for existing and new rail fleet maintenance, including all preventative & corrective maintenance, and leading new fleet design.

Rob began his transit career as a Field Engineer for a communication systems provider. Later, he joined car builder Kinkisharyo as Maintenance Supervisor.

Rob joined Valley Metro as the Light Rail Technical Trainer and was promoted to Superintendent.

Rob holds a BS degree in Organizational Leadership and is a graduate of the EnoMAX Program.

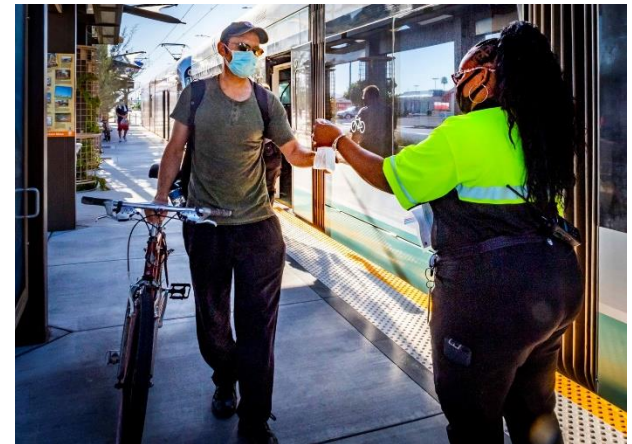
# Agency Characteristics and Services

- Valley Metro exists to connect communities and enhance lives through:
  - 100+ local, commuter and circulator bus routes (900 buses)
  - 28 miles of light rail (50 trains + growing)
  - Vanpool and paratransit
- Serving 64 million passengers per year
  - Now, ridership is down approx. 50% during COVID-19 public health emergency
- Building a \$2.2 billion rail capital program
- With policy guidance from two Boards of Directors
  - Consisting of 19 jurisdictions across Maricopa County



# Impacts of COVID-19

- Ridership is down 48%
  - 57% on rail
  - 45% on bus
  - 55% on paratransit
- Revenue is down:
  - Fare: 90%
  - Regional sales tax: 7%
- CARES Act funding is highly supportive:
  - Service stability
  - Enhanced cleaning & fogging
  - PPE & operator protective barriers
- Yet, in terms of construction, we've been able to optimize the schedule:
  - Doing more work with less traffic volumes





# Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment

- Antiviral wipe down of all high touch surfaces (offices, light rail vehicles (LRVs), LRV stations)
- Fogging monthly with added barrier solution (LRVs, Offices, Non-revenue vehicles)
- Fogging of bus fleet done every other day
- Standard safety precautions for employees including social distancing and face coverings
- Reduced service has allowed us to overcome the challenges created due to additional employee time off
- Encourage social distancing on LRVs and buses



# Transit Agency Panelist



**Donna Johnson**

Vice President, Chief Safety Officer  
Dallas Area Rapid Transit  
Dallas, Texas

Ms. Donna Johnson has 32 years of safety experience and 16 years of service at Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART). She has an extensive background in Bus and Rail Safety, Operations Safety, Industrial Safety, and Regulatory compliance.

Her previously held positions at DART include:

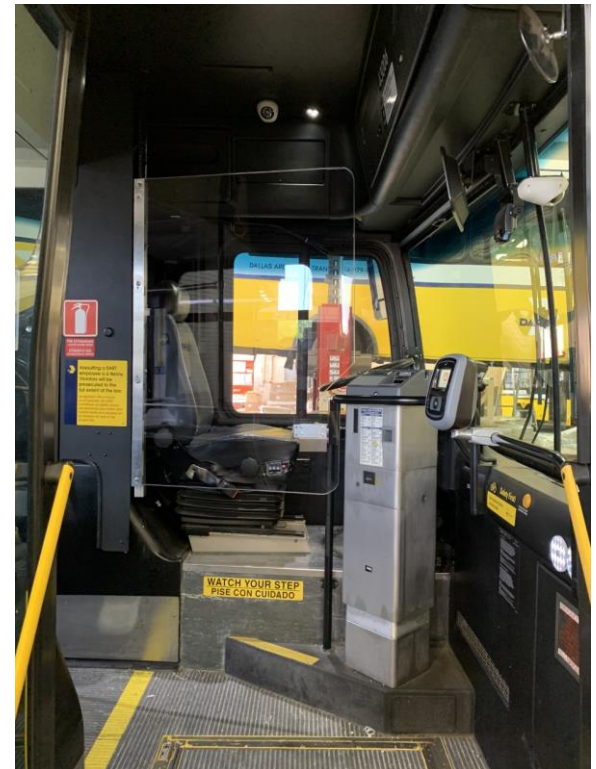
- Director of Safety
- Sr. Manager Safety Analysis and Compliance
- Manager of Industrial Safety and Health
- Safety Specialist

# Agency Characteristics and Services

- DART services:
  - Bus
  - Rail
  - Commuter Rail
  - Streetcar
  - Mobility- Paratransit
- DART provides transit services for Dallas, Texas, and 12 surrounding cities with modern public transit services and customer facilities.
- Our extensive network of DART Light Rail, Trinity Railway Express commuter rail, bus routes and paratransit services moves more than 220,000 passengers per day across our 700-square-mile service area.

# Impacts of COVID-19

- Decreased in ridership – Adjusted to modified Saturday services
  - Looking to return to 90% service in October
- Other impacts include a pause in:
  - Spending on consulting
  - Training and conferences
  - Business travel and programs
  - Hiring freeze of all open position
    - unless identified as a critical positions
- CARES Act funding
  - DART received \$229.6 million
  - Used for COVID-19 related expenditures
    - PPE – Mask, Gloves, Sanitizer
    - Marketing and Communication
    - Equipment
    - Retrofit of Bus Operator Shields





# Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment

- Efforts DART has undertaken to manage vehicles and facilities during COVID-19 public health emergency
  - Cleaning vehicles and facilities with EPA-approved cleaning agents
    - Light rail vehicles and buses are both cleaned with Halosil Foggers and over 70% of buses are equipped with SanUVAire Breathe Safe Germicidal UV Systems
  - Daily cleaning of all 385 buses and 157 rail cars
  - 27 fogging machines used to clean bus, rail and TRE equipment and facilities
    - Professional services contractor utilized for facility and vehicle cleaning when a potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus has been identified
  - Marketing and Communications Department developed communications to encourage riders to wear masks and practice social distancing
    - Signs, digital communication, and videos
    - How to ride safely during the pandemic
    - DART Serves Initiative

# Managing Vehicles and Facilities in a New Service Environment

- Passenger facilities remain closed
- Face mask and sanitizer dispensers on buses and trains; face shields for bus operators
- “Contactless” environment, including cashless pay system
  - GoPass App and Tap Card
- Temperature scans of all employees in the workplace
- Development of COVID-19 Core Team to act on behalf of the agency
- Planning employee return to worksite schedule
- Bulletins distributed using multiple channels, including direct distribution
- No face-to-face meetings: Posting on InfoStation and digital dashboards, creating virtual trainings
- COVID-19 Fatigue Assistance via the Employee Assistance Program

# Strategies, Service Planning, Tools, and Resources Used to Support these Efforts

- Plan Ahead Team prepared workstream lists that included a combination of cost-savings actions taken and contemplated
- Adjustments to budget, employee count, and miles and hours of service to respond to changing sales tax revenue
- Reduced service levels (returning to 90% Oct. 2020)
- Assessment of agency employee levels
  - Voluntary retirement plans

# Audience Questions

# Thank You!

This session has been recorded.  
The presentation, recording, and transcript will be  
posted on FTA's website.