Webinar Agenda

Welcome & Introduction
  • Melissa Gray, NADTC Senior Program Manager, n4a

Invited Panelists
  • Julia Castillo, Executive Director, HIRTA Public Transit

Facilitated Discussion/Q&A
Instructions for Zoom Meeting Participation

• All participants are muted. Please stay muted unless you are speaking.
• The session is being recorded and will be sent via email along with slides and evaluation. All materials will be put on the NADTC website.
• Closed captioning is available. You can turn captioning on/off by clicking on the cc button.
• Questions should be entered into the Q&A box.
• Please do not submit questions in the chat, but chat is open and can be used for general comments or technical assistance.
MAJOR OBJECTIVES:

- Person-centered technical assistance and information
- Training
- Communication and Outreach
- Coordination and partnership
- Investment in community solutions

MISSION: To promote the availability of accessible transportation options that serve the needs of Older Adults, People with Disabilities, Caregivers and Communities.

Photo Credit: Metrolina Association for the Blind, Charlotte, NC
Why a Transportation Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative?

- 2017 NADTC poll findings that African Americans, Hispanic Americans and whites differ in the ways they use transportation.
- Historical and current inequities resulting in disparities in service availability and accessibility.
- By 2050, the U.S. will be a minority majority nation.
- Current Administration’s priority
NADTC’s Transportation Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative

- National Transportation Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey
  - Received 2,435 responses from diverse Older Adults, People with Disabilities and Caregivers.
- Focus Groups
- Regional Meetings
- Lunch & Learn Webinar Series
Topical Areas to Address

- Accessibility
- Awareness
- Best Practices
- Data/Measurement
- Education/Training
- Funding
- Industry
- Operations/Workplace
- Outreach/Engagement
- Partnerships
- Planning/Implementation
- Program Examples
- Rural
- Other/General
HIRTA
PUBLIC TRANSIT
Who we are

• In 1981, the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) was formed under a 28E agreement with the 7 counties in central Iowa.

• Region 11, better known as HIRTA, was established to provide public transit services in the counties of Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story and Warren.

Facebook: @RideHIRTA
Twitter: @RideHIRTA
YouTube: HIRTA Public Transit
Website: www.RideHIRTA.com
Inclusion Statement

HIRTA is committed to creating a safe and inclusive experience for all passengers. We will promote an environment reflective of our communities. Regardless of ability, background or personal circumstances, we will ensure all riders feel welcome and included with HIRTA. Come be yourself, ride together, and ride HIRTA.
Our Board and Staff

We make a conscious effort embrace and promote diversity and inclusion throughout our agency – especially when considering service changes and hiring to fill open positions.

Our office staff and drivers are comprised of diverse individuals.

HIRTA Board members are elected County Supervisors appointed to our Board. Each year we encourage the County to appoint someone to help us maintain a diverse board.
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: What does that mean?

One of my favorite ways describe Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is from Chief Diversity Officer Robert Sellers from the University of Michigan who likens the various aspects to attending a dance:

• **Diversity** is where everyone is invited to the party
• **Equity** means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist
• **Inclusion** means that everyone has the opportunity to dance
• When it comes to DEI, it is better to begin somewhere and learn as you go than to do nothing.

• An agency with good intentions shouldn’t be afraid to seek feedback from people in their own agency or community. Be vulnerable and learn from others.

• Create a people-centered approach that can be seen and felt throughout the agency and beyond. There is more to DEI than just being compliant.

• Representing what the world looks like gives people a sense of belonging and helps employees and those who use your services feel safer, respected and more connected.
Where to Start

- Know why DEI is important to your agency
- Ensure Leadership is on board with the vision
- Examine workplace practices with DEI in mind and make necessary changes
  - Ask employees how they feel, what they want
  - Review policies to ensure they are inclusive and follow your DEI vision
  - Assess marketing/outreach processes and materials
- Provide training to all levels within your
- Determine what success looks like
HIRTA’s DEI Webpage

• **Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**
  - Accessibility—Opportunities to participate physically, geographically and linguistically
  - Transparency - People have sufficient access to HIRTA meetings to voice their opinions
  - Adaptation - Translate documents, notices, etc to be more inclusive to people in our communities
  - Training - All HIRTA staff receive training in Title V, ADA, DEI, How to use Language Line, LEP, etc.

• **Breakdown of race of Service Area**
  - Knowing and understanding the breakdown is important to make sure HIRTA operates as a company reflective of our communities.

• **What we ask of others**
  - Tell us what we can do for you to help on future rides
  - Understand we’ll do our best to make necessary changes or modifications
  - Reach out to us if you have any concerns, comments or ideas to make HIRTA more inclusive
  - Treat fellow riders and drivers with respect
Our Website

• Available in over 100 languages

• Documents in Spanish are on our website
  o Through our contract with Language Line, we are able to translate documents in other languages as needed and/or requested

• Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

• Public Participation Plan

• Board agendas and minutes
  o Meetings are open to the public in person and virtual
Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

The LEP Plan is for those who are not fluent in the English language. Meaning they have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

HIRTA is committed to ensuring no person is excluded from participation in or denied transit services on the basis of race, color, or national origin. This plan is used as a guide for HIRTA administration and management of LEP related activities.
Inclusive Materials

- Large print brochure
- Translated materials
- Impaired vision brochure
- Beyond the Bus Symposium: Inclusion Matters (2021)
- And more! Plus more to come
THE IMPORTANCE OF ACCESSIBILITY

Some riders have disabilities including impaired vision. Everyone deserves accessible transportation, and you are providing a great service to our communities.

Learning to help guide riders with a vision impairment may seem daunting. The tips in this brochure will help you develop confidence in better assisting these riders.

Thank you for your kindness and willingness to serve!

LEARN MORE

AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR THE BLIND
WWW.AFB.ORG

FIGHTING BLINDNESS
WWW.FIGHTINGBLINDNESS.IE

VISIONAWARE
WWW.VISIONAWARE.ORG

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS?

CONTACT US: 1 (877) 686-0029

ASSISTING RIDERS WITH IMPAIRED VISION
INTRODUCTIONS
OFFERING YOUR ARM TO GUIDE THE RIDER
Touch the back of your hand to the rider’s hand.
Here’s the back of my hand. Please grip my arm above the elbow.

BASIC NAVIGATION
NARROW SPACES
It’s narrow here. Keep holding my arm and walk directly behind me.

TURNING AROUND
We need to turn around. Let’s face each other and you grab my other arm.

SWITCHING ARMS
You need to hold my other arm. Reach across my back with your free arm and grip my other arm.

SEATING
ENTERING A CAR
Instruct the rider to place their hand on the roof of the car above the door.
Now you know you’re facing the front of the car. Go ahead and sit down when you’re ready, and I’ll tell you when I close the door.

ASSISTING WITH SEATING
Place the rider’s hand on the back of the chair or bus seat.
Here’s your seat. I’ve placed your hand on the back of the chair.

STEPS & STAIRS
APPROACHING STAIRS
We’re approaching steps going up/down. I’ll step at the edge of the stairs, then you come level to my side.

GOING UP/DOWN STAIRS
There’s a handrail on your right. I’ll go first and stay one step ahead. I’ll stop when I get to the bottom.

DOORS
APPROACHING DOORS
You should be on the side closest to the doorknob. Switch arms if needed.
There’s a door ahead of us. I’ll open it.

GOING THROUGH DOORS
Offer door to the rider’s free arm.
Please take the door and close it behind you.
Beyond the Bus: Inclusion Matters

• Transportation plays a role in inclusion by giving everyone equal access to the same opportunities of those who do not use public transit.

• This event focused on inclusion and the role public transit plays to ensure everyone has equal opportunities to access the services they need to have a productive life.

• Recordings can be found on our YouTube page or by going to www.RideHIRTA.com/BeyondTheBus
Topics and Speakers

Transportation’s role in racial equity

The Impact COVID-19 has had on older riders

Trends that impact accessible services

Resources working to increase knowledge and access to transportation (panel)

Breaking Down Barriers

Creating an inclusive environment
The ATCI Project

- HIRTA was awarded a grant from the Developmental Disability Council and Iowa DOT, to perform an unmet needs assessment focused on transportation for people with disabilities.

- We partnered with Easterseals Project Action using the “Accessible Transportation Community Initiative” (ATCI).

- Created coalitions (which are still growing) and include stakeholders and community representatives. City, County, Economic Development, Healthcare, Dialysis, Agencies that serve those with Disabilities, Aging Resources, etc.

- Established 3 main goals and objectives for each of our 3 coalitions.

- Developed an action plan which includes buy-in from the coalition members, so this is not just transit staff working to accomplish the goals.
Sample Objective:

- Create and implement an inclusive education experience through social media, printed materials and website updates to attract new customers.

- Create “target” audience marketing materials.

- People with a variety of disabilities and those who serve them will be part of the process in helping us create appropriate content and materials to market our services. Is this written, radio, TV, social media?

- Feature those with Development and Physical Disabilities on the materials and messaging of our services.

- Create stories that people can relate to and highlight the important, convenience and fun of using Public Transit.
Final Thoughts

Be Transparent and Admit your Shortcomings - You need to have data showing how many people of different religions, sexual orientations, races, ethnicities, disabilities, etc. you have working and/or are serving before you know where you need to improve.

Use inclusive language - truly comes down to just one thing; use the names and phrases that a person uses to self-identify. It’s that simple. Inclusive language is all about making others feel heard, honored, and respected.

Lean into Discomfort - it is easier to ignore difficulties some people face, however, you have to learn how to have hard conversations, and make changes.

Educate Yourself – There are so many resources available. Take time to learn.

Diversify your network - Do you know five people within your industry who are either black, indigenous, people of color, someone with a disability, part of the LGBTQ+ community, or born in a different generation than you? If not, why not?

We all make mistakes.- When someone calls you out for it, rather than getting defensive, apologize. Discuss what happened. Try to understand the problem along with the impact. Learn from it, and then move on gracefully.

Listen - Humans operate your agency and are responsible for the success. Their sense of belonging, inclusion, and emotional safety is your direct responsibility. Act like it. Do the work. Make the changes. Be better.
Resources

**Diversity and Inclusion Terms/Language**
https://blog.ongig.com/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-terms/

**National RTAP Best Practice Spotlight-DEI in Public Transit**

**HIRTA Blog post about DEI**

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Nonprofit Sector**
https://bloomerang.co/resources/dei/

**Getting Ahead of the Curve with Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity – Video Training Free**

**LGBTQ 101 – June 25, 2021**
https://oneiowa.org/event/freelgbtq101/
Free LGBTQ 101 about the best practices for working with LGBTQ people, including pronouns, gender-neutral language, and the art of the apology
Thank you!

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