

RTAP Peer Roundtable Notes

Navigating Challenging Passengers

2/20/2025 | 1:00–2:30PM | Online

Attendees

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Angela Danielson | 14. Ron Decker |
| 2. Crystal Gauthier | 15. Stephanie Noerenberg |
| 3. Dave Deragisch | 16. Elizabeth Fawkes |
| 4. Douglas Gerlach | 17. Richard Decker |
| 5. Gale Schulz | 18. Karen DeBoer |
| 6. Gerald Brylski | 19. Cecila Kenneh |
| 7. Heather Vinson | 20. Stacy Struck |
| 8. Jason Ebert | 21. Kayla Sullivan |
| 9. Joanne Brackey | 22. Mariah Kathan |
| 10. Lezlie Grubich | 23. Jaycie Kratky |
| 11. Pat LaCourse | |
| 12. Paul Coyour | |
| 13. Randy Jahnke | |

Roles

- Timekeeper: Pat LaCourse

Biggest Challenges:

- Handling misunderstandings between drivers and passengers and knowing how to navigate the different sides of the story as a manager
- Finding common ground
- Understanding how to stick to rules but keep customers happy
- How to manage preschool age riders
- Communicating to passengers who don't want to follow policies
- Handling drunk passengers
- Managing passengers that want to do same-day rides or who change their reservation last minute.
- Handling repeat offenders
- Reinforcing policies around about being prepared on 10 minutes on each side of the pick-up time, for passengers who complain about missing the bus.

- How to handle riders with special needs, such as people with disabilities or young riders who may need services above what is offered
- Defining roles and responsibilities of dispatchers and drivers
- Handling cancellations and no-shows.
- Reinforcing the policy when passengers ask to go off-route
- Being patient with the passengers and understanding their views and what their needs are so they don't feel like they need to push the boundaries
- Talking to both drivers and dispatch to get the full story before handling the situation with the passenger.
- Drivers tell their supervisor about an event but are not following up with an incident report so then no action can be taken.
- When passengers are late for pickups it can throw off the entire schedule.
- Passengers that call multiple times a day to confirm pick up time.

Solutions:

- Fees for riders who change rides or cancel last minute.
- Watch tapes to see what happened.
- Have a clear cancellation policy. For example, cancellations must be made 2 hours before scheduled ride.
- If riders routinely miss scheduled rides, could move them to same day pick up only (if it's in your policy).
- Explain the policies to passengers in advance and after a policy is violated
- Ban or suspend repeat offenders for a period of time (include this in your posted policies), for example repeat no-shows can be suspended for 3 weeks.
- Manage your emotions when talking with passengers
- Give passengers the space to calm down
- Use your software (if you have it) to include notes about passenger needs that the driver can see. This can help avoid miscommunication.
- Communicate and reiterate your pick-up window policy clearly to passengers.
- Don't expect your passengers to remember pages of policies if they're only provided once, use many opportunities to reinforce and communicate the policies to them.
- Share an onboarding letter with new riders that explains the policies
- Give the passenger a courtesy call on the first time they no-show explaining the policy.

- With young passengers, the policy is that the drivers needs to see an adult before driving off. If they can't verify that an adult is present, call dispatch to call the home to have an adult come out.
- For some riders with developmental disabilities who are in shared housing, a policy might be that staff must be available to receive the rider at drop-off.
- Include clean-up kits on buses for passengers that get sick or have a bathroom accident.
- Reinforce the importance of completing incident and accident reports with drivers, so that supervisors and managers are aware of anything that happens.
- Include a clear policy for young riders. One system shared that their policy is that young riders under age 7 must be supervised by an adult or older sibling.
- Implement software that does reminder calls.
- Write down the passenger's schedule to give them at their first ride.
- Practice scenarios with drivers before they happen.

Ask a Peer:

Question: What to do about a driver who is venturing off their route to run personal errands?

Answer: Reinforce the policy with the driver about deviations from the route (in this case, the policy was that the driver had to be within 1 mile of their route).

1st Reminder of Policy

2nd Coaching

3rd Corrective Action

Question: Is anyone else having issues with the new buses?

Answer: Many transit agencies have been having issues with new buses. The group discussed that they have observed manufacturing changes that have resulted in recalls, paint, and mechanical issues such as needing to replace tailpipe brackets weekly.

Topics to cover this year:

- Retaining Staff
- Growing Ridership
- Providing Youth Rides

Next Peer Roundtable: March 20, 1–2:30pm