DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

RTAP Peer Roundtable Notes
Succession Planning
11/21/2025 | 1:00–2:30PM| Online

Attendees

1. Kenneth Bakken
2. Paul Coyour
3. Crystal Gauthier
4. Hugh Killam
5. Jason Ness
6. Kathy Grobe
7. Christine Neary
8. Brenda Brittin
9. Kayla Neptune
10. Jeremy Monahan
11. Ted Nelson
12. Lezlie Grubich
13. Dusitn (Paul Bunyan Transit)
14. Ron Decker
15. Tracy Borgschatz
16. Kathy Schultz
16. John Dulmes (Michigan RTAP)
17. Mariah Kathan
18. Jaycie Kratky

Roles

- Timekeeper: Paul Coyour
- Parking Lot:
- Conversation Encourager:

Biggest Challenges:

- Lack of formal or documented succession plans
- Resistance to change from leadership, boards, or staff
- Staff unwilling or hesitant to move into leadership roles
- Wide range of responsibilities concentrated in one position
- Loss of institutional knowledge due to sudden departures
- Siloed roles and limited cross-training
- Limited time, budget, and office space to plan for succession
- Technology gaps and resistance to new systems
- Difficulty transferring procurement, compliance, and administrative knowledge

Solutions and Strategies Shared

- Cross-training staff and avoiding silos by sharing responsibilities
- Creating assistant or deputy roles to build leadership pipelines

- Gradually involving potential successors in meetings, trainings, and decision-making
- Maintaining organized documentation, binders, and process guides
- Using comprehensive reviews and long-range plans as succession roadmaps
- Embedding succession planning into organizational culture and job expectations
- Encouraging staff to attend RTAP, MnDOT, and peer trainings
- Simplifying processes to make transitions easier
- Communicating consistently with boards about long-term staffing needs
- Viewing succession planning as an ongoing mindset, not a one-time plan

Ask a Peer – Questions and Answers

Question 1: How should transit agencies respond when law enforcement requests information about a rider who may be on or recently used transit services?

Answer: Participants shared that agencies generally try to cooperate with law enforcement by providing non-sensitive information such as pick-up or drop-off locations. Many agencies refer the request to a manager or director and avoid sharing private data unless necessary. Several noted the importance of having clear internal policies and suggested seeking legal or state guidance to establish consistent practices.

Question 2: What does an effective succession plan actually look like? Is it a document or a process?

Answer: Participants emphasized that succession planning is both a mindset and a process. Rather than a single binder or document, it involves ongoing documentation, organized workflows, cross-training, and intentional leadership development. Some agencies use binders, manuals, or long-range plans, while others focus on cultural expectations that every role should be prepared for transition.

Question 3: How do agencies decide which decisions should be made before a leadership transition versus left for the next leader?

Answer: While no single approach fits all agencies, participants suggested balancing stability with flexibility. Foundational systems, documentation, and compliance practices should be solidified, while leaving room for future leaders to shape strategic direction and improvements.

Next Peer Roundtable: December 18, 2025, Topic– Incident/Accident Report