



Emergency Management and Planning

Presented by: Stephany Weed, Administrative Assistant

People's Transit, Huron, South Dakota



Objective:

To become a reliable resource as a local public transportation agency.

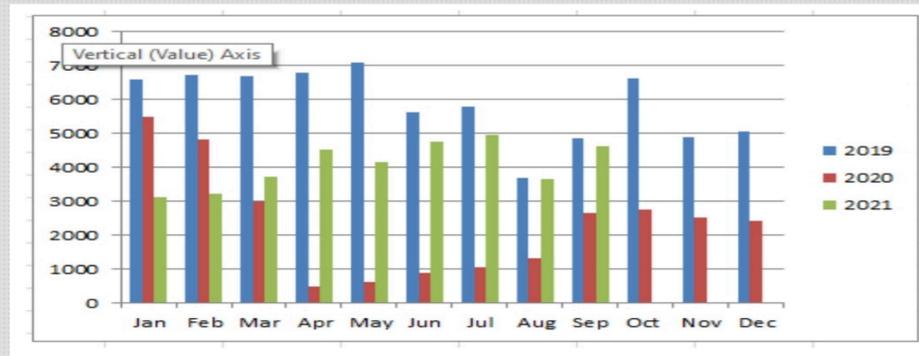
To be a means of transportation in the event of an emergency by developing and implementing a plan while providing a safe and reliable service to all passengers.

Approach:

1. I first contacted the Mayor, who also served as Liaison on our Board of Directors. He helped get me in touch with the Emergency Management Director as well as the Fire Chief.
2. I was able to meet with the Emergency Management Director, who filled me in on the wants and needs of our town, as well as provided me with some detailed information relating to Beadle County's operations in the event of an emergency. He also invited me to attend the quarterly local emergency planning committee meetings (LEPC).
3. The local Fire Chief invited me to attend a mock tornado drill at a nearby assisted living facility. I was able to observe response times and the triage process. I was able to identify, in the event of an emergency, if People's Transit could help transport during an evacuation.
4. I checked with neighboring transit agencies within my state regarding plans they had in place within their communities including MOU's and contracts with stakeholders. I learned several agencies have participated in some type of emergency drill, which helped give me an idea of what I wanted to see in my own agency.

Challenges:

One of the biggest challenges was that a national emergency did occur. The pandemic swept through our nation affecting so many in real time. It started with disruptions of service to many businesses. Medical facilities developed restrictions. Assisted Living Facilities were put on lockdown. Schools were closing. This impacted our ridership greatly. 14 of our 18 staff members were furloughed. By April 2020 our ridership had dropped 92% from the previous year. (Ridership data below)



Results:

- People's Transit purchased polycarbonate shields for our buses and minivans to help provide a protective barrier for our drivers and passengers. As an extra layer of protection, electrostatic sprayers were purchased to disinfect the vehicles. Protocols were put in place and drivers were disinfecting their buses and minivans between trips. Staff logged their temperatures before and after their shifts.
- Mandatory mask wearing was implemented in April 2020. Masks were handed out to any passenger who did not have one before traveling.
- Our agency needed to be creative in how to maintain and increase ridership during a pandemic. One of the ways we did this was by partnering with the local grocery stores to deliver pre-paid groceries safely and contactless. This was helpful to many who were more at-risk, vulnerable, and/or who had COVID exposure.
- When the COVID vaccine became available we gave free round-trip rides to anyone within our community who wanted or needed transportation.
- There is a written emergency plan with the Beadle County Emergency Management Office that shares our fleet size as well as dimensions of the garage bay for use if needed.



Photo: Executive Director, Gayle Kludt of People's Transit posing through one of the protective barriers in the transit bus.

Conclusion:

I've learned it is important to keep all emergency information current and updated, as well as all safety items to be checked on a regular basis. There are some great websites that will help you build a plan for any type of emergency.



Resources:

- People's Transit/ Executive Director/ Gayle Kludt
- Brookings Area Transit Association/ Executive Director/ Brenda Schweitzer
- River Cities Public Transportation/ Executive Director/ Ron Baumgart
- Prairie Hills Transit/ Executive Director/ Barb Cline/ Operations & Information Manager/ Lisa Straub Johnson
- CTAA Emerging Leader Mentor/ Former Executive Director/ Via Mobility Services/ Lenna Kottke

Contact Information:

For more information on this project or to see this project in its entirety please contact Stephany Weed: Office.poepelstransit@midconetwork.com or visit: <https://www.peopelstransithuron.com>

A full length report on my project can be found by pointing your camera at the QR code below.

