Dispatcher Training
Montgomery, AL
February 8, 2018
Introductions
Agenda

♦ Morning
  ○ Customer Service
  ○ Scheduling
  ○ Working with Drivers and Maintenance
  ○ Exercise #1
  ○ Communications

♦ Afternoon
  ○ Prioritizing
  ○ Safety Management Systems (SMS)
  ○ Emergency Response
  ○ Exercise #2
  ○ Importance of Policies and Procedures
Dispatcher Defined

Under general supervision, operates communication systems utilizing radio, telephone and computer equipment to provide assistance to bus drivers and the public in support of daily transit operations of demand response and fixed-route transit services.
Dispatcher Defined

Cont..

Prepares and maintains manual and computerized files and records including operations reports, incident logs, accident reports, and data concerning service interruptions, cancellations, vehicle breakdowns, etc.; provides information to the public; dispatches personnel and equipment in response to service requests.
Dispatcher Defined

What is missing?

Does it mention anything about the quality of the work?
Customer Service

Who are our customers?
Customer Service

How do we interface with them?

- Telephone
  - Scheduling ride
  - Where’s my ride
  - Complaint/Compliment
  - Questions
- Email, text, website, twitter
- Walk-in
  - Buy fare, tickets or passes
  - Questions
  - Paratransit Eligibility
- Through driver
  - As a go between
Customer Service

Untrained Listener vs.
- Tune out some of what caller is saying because you think you know the answer or because you don’t care about the background
- Use the same response
- Respond to everything rider says
- Might be multi-tasking – not undivided attention
- Get caught up in riders emotions

Trained Listener
- Allow rider to finish, pause then respond
- Response should be custom to information in the call
- Concentrate on main information and don’t get sidetracked with non-pertinent information
- Listening full time avoids mistakes
- Emotions should not govern your response
Customer Service

Time is crucial. How do I keep from spending too much time on a call with a rider? Choose one.

♦ Wait for the rider to mention their bunions then explain you have to pick up your child from daycare.
♦ Kindly interrupt and let the rider know you have their information, the ride is booked, but others are on hold. *(The rider probably hates to be on hold and will hopefully understand)*
♦ Inform the rider your office just started monthly fire alarm drill and you need to exit the building.

wind of up to 30mph as a result of hurricane Gertrude….stay tuned to News 12…
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<td>Come to back door</td>
<td>Name of Company</td>
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<td>Rider will need lift</td>
<td>Vehicle information if other company</td>
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<td>Return Trip</td>
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Customer Service

Remember, riders are our business.
Riders are our neighbors.
Riders may know people in legislature.
Riders vote.
Customer Service

Exercise #1
Dispatcher v. Scheduler

- Depending on size of system, it may be the same person.
- Scheduler focuses on future, Dispatcher focuses on present.
- Both may perform call-intake
- Both must be aware of asset availability – drivers, vehicles, seats
- Both must know service area (even if double checking behind automation)
Scheduling

Role of Scheduler

♦ Schedule ride in efficient manner taking into account passenger needs and existing service parameters

♦ Provide accurate information for passenger and driver

♦ Ensure proper vehicle to meet needs of days riders
Scheduling

Bus #1
- 08:30 Pickup
- 08:45 Pickup
- 09:00 Dropoff
- 09:08 Pickup...

Van #14
- 8:17 Pickup
- 8:45 Pickup
- 9:00 Pickup

Mvan #26
- 8:25 Pickup
- 9:10 Dropoff
Scheduling

Need:
Current fleet availability
  Type of vehicle, ADA, seats
  Driver availability *
Ability to determine distances/time/time of day
Existing trips before adding
Rider needs
Environmental concerns – weather, construction etc..

* may be a dispatcher function
### Scheduling

#### Daily Vehicle Availability Sheet

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<th>Type</th>
<th>Make</th>
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Scheduling

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Scheduling

Goals of Scheduling:

♦ Efficiency – most trips, fewest vehicles, minimal deadhead
♦ Productivity – most trips, fewest vehicles
♦ Customer Service – time on bus, within window, on-time performance, no denials
♦ Optimizing Assets – right sized vehicle for manifest
♦ Safety – minimal trip interruptions, add-ons, trip changes

Starts with Call-Intake
Scheduling

Call Intake Process

You must have the ability to negotiate the pickup time with the customer. Negotiations are based on goals stated on last slide.

Some systems use a “pickup window” to allow flexibility.
Scheduling

Pickup Window for 11:30 scheduled pickup with a half hour window and 10 min wait.
Scheduling

Negotiate Time

Once the appointment time is determined, work backwards.

What vehicles do I have nearby

Dr’s Appointment at 11:30
Scheduling

We have a van in your area at 11:00 that can pick you up.

I’m sorry 11:00 is the only time available at this point. The next van might get you there after your appointment.

The doctors office is only 10 minutes away from my house. I would like to be picked up at 11:15.

Well if that’s the best you can do I guess I’ll take it.
Scheduling

Negotiation

♦ Need to know where all your vehicles are located during time period

♦ Need to know status of vehicles
  ○ Passengers on board
  ○ Vehicle capacity including wheelchair capacity

♦ Can pickup fit into existing manifest

♦ Will a window help with timing
Scheduling

![Graph showing balance between Performance and Customer Service over time.](image-url)
Scheduling

Performance Measures:

- Passengers per hour – Passenger/hours
- Revenue miles – Deadhead/Total miles
- On-time performance – On time/total trips
Employee Relations

How well do you get along with your drivers?
Employee Relations

How do we interact with our drivers?

- Call with work assignment
- Beginning of shift
- Two-way radio/phone/mobile data terminal
- End of shift
- Training
Employee Relations

Dispatch needs to understand the demands on the driver.

- On-time performance
- Customer service
- Directions
- Defensive driving
- Passenger challenges
- Traffic conditions
- Weather conditions
- Fares
- Paperwork
- Company policies
- Vehicle condition
- Traffic Laws
Employee Relations

Minimize burden on dispatch and driver by...

- Ensure route or manifest is accurate and achievable.
- Keep communication to a minimum – policies
- Don’t set driver up to fail
- Don’t discount drivers feedback (constructive)
- Support driver if running late or having issues
- Keep tabs on driver
Employee Relations

How well do you get along with the maintenance department?
Employee Relations

- Dispatch and Maintenance Departments must be coordinated to ensure morning pull-outs have no surprises.
- Preventive maintenance must be coordinated through dispatch/scheduling.
- A positive relationship=less vehicle downtime
- Involve maintenance in training
Communications

Effective communication is the heart of dispatching.
Communication missteps can result in poor performance, irate customers or drivers or safety issues.
Communications

Methods of Communications
Communications

In 2014, 3,179 people were killed—10 percent of all crash fatalities—and an estimated 431,000 people were injured in distraction-affected crashes.

**The Three Types of Distracted Driving and How to Avoid Them**

**Visual**
- Keep your eyes on the road.
- Pull over to read directions.
- Put your phone in “Do Not Disturb” mode.

**Manual**
- Keep your phone out of reach.
- Make all adjustments before driving.
- Don’t reach for items while driving.

**Cognitive**
- Avoid phone calls, even hands-free.
- Stay focused on the road.
- Keep your emotions in check.
Communications

- Use 10 codes
- Some systems share signals
- Policies on driver response
- Repeater company may charge by air time
- Passengers on all vehicles hear
Communications

- Should allow minimal input from driver
- Should not be used until vehicle is stopped
- Review policies for use
- Use addresses not descriptors (Cancer Center, Methadone Clinic)
- Ensure security
Communications

- Private phone = private messaging/calls
- Review policies
- Apps to make inactive if moving
- Must be hardened to stand punishment
- Must have security settings
- Easily distracting
Prioritization

As a dispatcher you are constantly making decisions. Many times you must prioritize actions.

What factors go into your decision making? What makes passenger trip/situation more important than another?
Prioritization

Factors in decision making.

- Safety
- Policy
- Needs of rider
- Impacts on future trips – domino effect
- Vehicle
- Driver
Safety Management Systems
Safety Management Systems (SMS)

- Concept taken from airline industry
- FTA adapted for transit in MAP-21
- Bus Safety Program
- Scalable to any size system
- Strategically applies resources to risk
- Agency-wide, collaborative approach
Safety Management Systems (SMS)

♦ Safety regulatory framework
  ○ Organization wide safety policy
  ○ Formal method of identifying hazards
  ○ Controlling their potential consequences
  ○ Continually assessing safety risk
  ○ Promoting effective employee safety reporting
Safety Management Systems (SMS)

SMS Components:
- Safety Management Policy
- Safety Risk Management
- Safety Assurance
- Safety Promotion
Disruptive Passengers

A disruptive passenger should be considered a threat.

They take many forms with various intents.

A dispatcher must be prepared to protect driver, passengers and vehicle through their actions.
Disruptive Passengers

Range from a passenger refusing to pay the fare to a passenger with a weapon.

Issues today include opioid addiction, mental instability (depression, PTSD, bi-polar), domestic violence, alcohol addiction.

Some of the passengers we transport may have hidden disabilities listed above.
Disruptive Passengers

Training for front line employees is imperative.

Proactive Steps:

♦ Training
♦ Develop codes – 10 code or code word for an emergency, destination sign alert or panic button.
♦ Policies and procedures
♦ Coordination with first responders – cross training
♦ Drill
♦ Video surveillance system
Disruptive Passengers

- Dispatch must remember, if using two way radio, all passengers may be listening.
- Deescalate the conflict if possible – policy breach better than injuries
- Remain calm, focused and attentive
- Continue developing solutions as more information becomes available
- Alternative communications for all but situation
- Call care giver of rider if there is one
Emergency Management

What role do you play in an emergency?

What are the chances of an emergency effecting your transit system?

Are you prepared to respond to an emergency event?
Emergency Management

As a dispatcher you should have the following:

- Emergency Status Scale
- Emergency Call-down list
- Emergency plan with role of dispatch
- Policies and procedures for emergency event
- Redundant operations
- Protecting assets & employees
- Data security and backup
- Training in NIMS and ICS
- Fleet and Driver List
Emergency Management

Policies and procedures modified for emergency events.

- Route modifications
- Service modifications
- Employee schedules
- Labor union modifications
- Some regulations may be waived
- Document all service above and beyond
Dispatch must plan and practice for all types of events.

- Vehicle staging areas
- Hotel rooms for essential personnel
- Maintenance support
- Communications infrastructure
- Fueling commitment
- Coordination w/ first responders including police, fire, National Guard
- Data and work station mobility
Questions?

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KShawn@rlsandassoc.com