

Downtown Transit Center



Harmony Transfer Center

US 34 Park-N-Ride

Regional Bustang Travel Training

Local and Regional Travel Training for Older Adults
in Larimer County, Colorado

After Action Report
October 2018

Denver Union Station

**Regional Bustang Travel Training
October 4, 2018
Larimer County, Colorado**

A project of:



In partnership with:



Report prepared by:

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Introduction

Larimer County is home to a diverse population spread across rural areas in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains and dense, urban environments like Fort Collins. In all areas of the County, the population is aging. Throughout the County, mobility is a major issue – the population is aging, traffic is increasing, and travel times are longer. Driving along Interstate-25 (I-25) between Fort Collins, Loveland, Berthoud, and Denver can be daunting, especially for older adults.

The Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) operates a regional bus service called Bustang, along I-25, while the cities of Fort Collins, Loveland, and Berthoud operate local transit service within their communities. Bustang has three stops in Larimer County: the Downtown Transit Center and Harmony Transfer Center in Fort Collins; and the US34 Park-n-Ride in Loveland. In Denver, Bustang stops at Union Station, a central transfer point for the Regional Transportation District's (RTD) bus services, commuter rail, and light rail.

Taking a proactive approach to improving mobility in Larimer County, community partners came together for a day-long Regional Bustang Travel Training event. These community partners who planned and held the event are known as the Work Group in this report:

- AARP
- Berthoud Area Transportation System (BATS)
- City of Loveland Transit (COLT)
- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)
- Larimer County Office on Aging (LCOA)
- North Front Range Metropolitan Planning Organization (NFRMPO)
- Partnership for Age-Friendly Communities (PAFC)
- Regional Transportation District (RTD)
- Rocky Mountain Student Media
- Transfort

What did the group set out to accomplish?

The group set out to accomplish three things with the *AARP Community Challenge* grant:

- Regional entities working together to plan and carry out the event;
- Participants signing up, filling the bus, and having a successful day learning how to use local transit to connect to Denver and beyond; and
- Videographers recording the event, with subsequent editing to create pieces which can be used for education and training in various Larimer County communities.

Over the course of a three-month period, the Work Group met to discuss travel training that would combine local and regional transit. The group applied for the *AARP Community Challenge* grant to set up a pilot Regional Travel Training and use what was learned to create a long-term program helping older adults, individuals with disabilities, and other special populations navigate local and regional

transit. In doing so, mobility would be greatly improved for those who cannot, choose not to, or otherwise do not drive. The Work Group wanted to show residents of Larimer County who are age 50 and older the ease and benefits of alternative transportation options in Larimer County.

For the pilot project, the Work Group decided on the following criteria. The participants should:

- Be age 50 or older;
- Be able to walk at least a mile by him or herself or with the use of a wheelchair or other mobility assistive device;
- Have an interest in riding Bustang in the future but not have ridden prior to the training; and
- Live within Fort Collins, Loveland, or Berthoud.

A Pre-Training Survey (**Attachment A**) was distributed prior to the travel training, giving the travel trainers a chance to frame the training to participants' specific questions and concerns. Many of the answers focused on becoming more comfortable and familiar with transit, including reading schedules, buying tickets, or connecting at transfer centers.

In addition to benefiting future transit riders, the Work Group also hoped to benefit the transit agencies involved (BATS, CDOT, COLT, RTD, and Transfort). The Work Group included Rocky Mountain Student Media; university students who would film the training and then create videos to be used as part of a long-range travel training program.

Regional Bustang Travel Training

What were the results?

The Regional Bustang Travel Training event took place on October 4, 2018. The Work Group used their own networks to market the event and received 45 applications. Actual day of event participation was 39 Larimer County residents, due to cancellations and change of schedules for the participants. Alex Gordon (NFRMPO), acted as the moderator and guide for the day. Anna Russo (Transfort), Ruth Fletcher-Carter (RAFT) and Mark Kirkpatrick (COLT) led participants from Fort Collins, Berthoud, and Loveland respectively.

The day started with local travel trainers from Transfort, COLT, and BATS training participants on their respective systems and making the connection to the Bustang pick-up location. Travel trainers provided information on paying fares, reading schedules, how to make a transfer, and hours of operation, among other topics.

Participants in the Regional Bustang Travel Training ranged between the ages of 60 to 90, with the group being evenly distributed throughout the age range and the average age being 75. One person reported having vision impairment and none reported having issues with walking up to one mile. Demographics were as follows:

- 15 participants from Fort Collins

- 6 participants from Loveland
- 18 participants from Berthoud

A Post-Training Survey (**Attachment B**) was distributed after the travel training. The training received an average score of **9.9** out of 10 (29 participants submitted responses).

What were the highlights of the project?

The Larimer County Senior Transportation Coalition (STC), the Mobility & Access Priority Group of PAFC, set goals to educate the older adult population on mobility options in Larimer County. Part of this education is to help older adults make proactive decisions about their ability to drive. During the training, multiple participants commented they wanted to learn about their mobility options before they could no longer drive and the opportunities Bustang could provide, specifically as they become less comfortable driving on I-25 and I-70.

Participants were excited to be able to practice riding transit and making transfers while learning at the same time and benefited from using active bus routes wherever possible for the training. All 29 respondents stated they feel more comfortable riding public transportation following the training. Of the 29, two respondents said they would apply the new skills they learned within a week, 18 within a month, and seven within a year. Two people responded they do not know if they would apply the new skills.

What could have been better?

Two questions in the Post-Training Survey allowed participants to comment on improving the training. Most survey responses stated the training was worthwhile, and some offered suggestions of ways to improve the training. The responses are summarized below:

- Allow more time in Denver on RTD and 16th St;
- Too much walking at Union Station; and
- The large group made it difficult to hear speakers.

Additionally, some participants stated they would like additional stops and trips on the Bustang bus. This information will be shared with CDOT for their reference.

What impact has the project had or will have?

On the application, participants were asked if they had previously participated in a travel training with their local transit agency and if they had previously ridden Bustang. Only a fraction of participants answered *YES* to previously participating in local travel training and ALL participants answered NO to having previously ridden Bustang.

Additionally, on the application, participants were asked to explain how they will benefit from the training. Their responses are summarized below:

- Will be able to visit family in Denver and other parts of the state without having to drive there;
- Will be able to use public transportation to get to health appointments, sports games and shows in Denver;

- Will be more knowledgeable about public transportation options and will be able to answer questions from citizens at organizations I volunteer for; and
- I can no longer drive and will need to rely on public transportation

What lessons did you learn or what advice would you give if another community wants to replicate your project?

Planning is key – the group felt comfortable and was willing to be patient because they knew the event was planned, organized, and supported. We would like to ask questions about what is needed in the training prior to the day of the event – some people were more interested in reading schedules, others wanted to learn how to navigate the different systems, etc. With prior input on training topics, we could have personalized the training to the group’s interests.

Performance Measures

What measurements and/or metrics did you capture?

The Work Group focused on filling one Bustang bus, which has a capacity of 51 people. In total, there were 45 participants, which broke down as: 39 older adults, three videographers, and three group leaders.

The community partners were interested in two key questions as part of the Post-Training Survey: 1) how soon participants would be able to apply what they learned during the training, and 2) what new information was learned. All 29 respondents stated they feel more comfortable riding public transportation. Of the 29, two respondents said they would apply the new skills they learned within a week, 18 within a month, and seven within a year. Two people responded they do not know if they would apply the new skills. Participants also stated the new information they learned ranged from how to read the bus schedules and different routes and destinations, transit centers and service hours, to how to make a transfer and how to pay a fare.

Future Program

What are your next steps?

Attachment C is a program guide based on best practices learned as part of this project. The Work Group plans to continue to do regional travel trainings on a smaller scale but consistent schedule.

Pictures



Berthoud Area Transportation System – BATS Paratransit service



Anna Russo, Transfort Travel Training Coordinator, explains the Transfort system



Participants board Transfort Route 16 to the Harmony Transfer Center



Bustang bus exterior



Alex Gordon answers questions while riding Bustang



Dan French and Farrah Champliss explain the RTD system at Union Station



Happy Bustang Travel Training Participants



Travel training participant thanks Farrah Champliss for the training



Travel training participants walk through Denver Union Station



Bustang Regional Travel Training Participant Questionnaire

Thank you for your interest in participating in the Regional Travel Training made possible due to the generous support from AARP and in collaboration with BATS, Bustang, CDOT, COLT, the NFRMPO, RTD, Transfort and the Partnership for Age Friendly Communities. The training will take place on **October 4th from 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.** (approximate). Training will include how to use local transit systems to connect to Bustang as well as an overview of RTD in Denver.

Name

Day Phone

Street

City

Zip Code

Email

Age *(this training is open to participants age 50 or older)*

First & Last Name of other individual participating with you

Each participant must fill out a separate questionnaire.

Please explain how you will benefit from this training.

Have you previously participated in a travel training with Transfort, COLT or BATS? YES NO

If "yes" explain.

Have you previously ridden BUSTANG? YES NO If, yes, explain.

Do you need special accommodations to participate? YES NO If, yes, explain.

This travel training will be filmed for educational purposes. I agree to sign a media release waiver the day of the training and agree to being filmed while I am participating in training.

Signature of Participant

Date

Please return completed form to *PAFC, PO Box 288, Fort Collins, CO, 80522*, email to info@pafclarimer.org, or return to your Travel Trainer by September 26, 2018.

Revised: 9/5/18



Pre-Training Survey – Bustang Regional Travel Training

Please take a moment to fill out this brief survey before the training. Thank you!

1) How frequently do you ride public transportation? (check all that apply)

- daily
- weekly
- monthly
- this is my first time
- rarely
- sometimes
- as my primary mode of transportation
- on weekends/special events
- never

2) What are the barriers that prevent you from riding public transportation (if any)? (check all that apply)

- I live out of town/too far from bus stops
- I prefer to drive
- I don't know how
- I haven't needed to
- N/A
- I have other transportation options

3) I would ride public transportation more if... (check all that apply)

- I was more comfortable
- Bus stops were closer to my house
- I knew how
- Buses came more frequently
- Buses went where I need to go
- Other – **Please Explain:**

4) Please list 2 things you hope to learn today:



Post-Training Survey – Regional Travel Training

Thank you for participating today. Please fill out this brief survey; we appreciate your feedback.

1) Overall on a scale of 1 – 10 (1 poor / 10 excellent) how would you rate this Travel Training?
(please circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2) The content of this training was applicable and relevant to my situation.
(please check one)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

3) After training, I feel I am more comfortable riding public transportation.
(please check one)

YES NO

4) What new information did you learn? Please select all that apply.

- Everything was new to me Routes & Different Destinations How to Make a Transfer
- How to Read the Schedules Transit Centers & Service Hours How to Pay a Fare
- Other - **Please Explain:**

5) What would you add to the training? Please explain.

6) After training, I hope to apply the new skills I learned:
(please check one)

within a week within a month within a year never don't know

7) I would recommend this training to others:
(please check one)

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree N/A

8) If you could improve one thing about this training, what would it be? Please explain.