Thank you all for joining us today. My name is Andrew Carpenter. I'm the Director of the National Center for Applied Transit Technology. And we are excited to talk about integrating micro mobility and transit.

And so, at NCATT which is operated by the Community Transportation Association of America, we focus on helping small urban, rural and tribal transit agencies with understanding new and emerging transit technologies, and the whole technology landscape. And then how to apply that to their transit agencies to achieve goals that you have set for yourself.

So, the idea is to be very deliberate and thoughtful about new technology and how they can help you. So, it's not technology for technology's sake, but it's really thinking through what tools you need to accomplish what you want to do.

And so, we do this through resources such as webinars like these. We also work on guidebooks, podcasts, and fact sheets. And so, those are populated on our website, which is at the bottom of your screen, N-CATT.ORG. We also provide in depth technical assistance through our innovative technology strike teams and our state technology summits. And the idea there is to really enable states and individual agencies to adopt new technologies and understand how to do so.

We also develop hands on workshops that transit agencies can use to upscale and focus on different tech concepts. So, we just held one on managing data, and then we are also developing one on geographic information services and free tools for using that.

And so, also, NCATT is a technical assistance center funded by the Federal Transit Administration. We work in a network of other TA centers. And so, one of the big themes of this is coordination among the TA centers and among transit agencies and different community service organizations so that way folks can get where they need to go.

So, the transportation, technical assistance coordination library, tackle, which is run by National Artech is focused on that coordination theme. And so, you can go there for a lot of different information about that. And then, finally, again, I'm Andrew, I'm the director. And Marcel Moreno is our transit technologists. We're the main faces for NCATT.

So, feel free to reach out to us at any time with any transit technology questions, and we'll be happy to answer them or look into them for you. And so, our contact information will also be on the last slide once we're done. And then, finally, before I hand it off to our speakers, we are doing a lot more on micromobility. So, we're working on a guidebook.

And so, one of the items that we would like to cover is your experiences with micro mobility. So, that way, we can know how to reach out to you or, know what's going on so far, and then meet everyone where they are in their experience. So, I just sent the survey monkey link out in the chat to everyone. So, please click on that and fill out that survey.

Should only take about five minutes. And then that would be great. Really helpful for us to develop our micro mobility resources. And so, overall, our goal with this webinar is to introduce everyone to the fact that transit agencies and micromobility services can work together.

They are not competition with each other. And there's a lot of good that can be done in collaborating between micromobility service and in transit. And so, one of the leading examples of this is the Kansas City area, KCATA, and BikeWalkKC. And so, I'm going to hand it off to Eric and David to get started.

Eric Vaughan: Thanks, Andrew. Let me go ahead and share my screen here. All right. I think everybody can see my slideshow?

Andrew Carpenter: Yes.

Eric Vaughan: Excited to be here with everybody today. Always happy to talk micromobility and bikes. I'm Eric Vaughan with RideKC Bike. I'm the director of the program. And really started with the program as it got its launched in 2012, or immediately after launch, I guess a few months after. And then, David, you want to introduce yourself as well?

David Johnson: Yeah. Thanks, Eric. David Johnson, vice president of planning and strategy for the Kansas City Area Transportation Authority. We're the regional vice state transportation authority on the Kansas and Missouri sides of the Kansas City Metro.

And a proud sponsor of the RideKC bike system that Eric's team owns and operates. And we see it as a key integration point with our transit network, buses and streetcars throughout the region. Happy to be with you today.

Eric Vaughan: So, what we're going to discuss today is a little bit of background, sort of where we've come from, what model we've decided to deploy here, why that model is so important to what we do.

Looking at new technologies, because we're actually one of the very few cities who has completely changed over our technology, and updated it from really an older, more traditional bikeshare model to something a little bit better fit for our current community. And then, of course, transit integration, I know everybody's anxious to talk about that.

So, we'll talk about the steps we've taken toward that, and also maybe some future plans that that we're thinking about as well. So, for the program history, I mentioned that we started in 2012. This is really early in bikeshare for America. We're probably one of the first half dozen or so cities to launch bikeshare so extremely early in the game.

And at that time, there was really only the dock-based technology where you had to physically take your bike and lock it into a dock at a physical station. And so, we started with that program in just the downtown core of Kansas City with just 12 locations, I think around 100 bikes. And started it immediately as a public, private, nonprofit partnership.

So, BikeWalkKC operating as the name nonprofit arm that was owning and operating in partnership with those other organizations in the community there to support and what we really saw was really a warm welcome from a community that was not a traditional bikeshare community by any means.

If you're not familiar with Kansas City, we're not dense, especially outside of the immediate urban core of downtown. And then we've got a lot of sprawl and really not a lot of infrastructure that's specific for biking and pedestrians.

So, it was a little bit of an uphill climb. But you can see here on some of the data, it really did start to take off. And with the timeline here in 2015, when you start to really see momentum bill, that's actually us expanding beyond that more dense urban core area, and getting out into this role.

So, we're actually going to more rural, less dense environments and awarded in ridership as a result of that. And I'll note as well, as we go further down the line, and the colors start to change, that's where we start to integrate additional technologies as well.

So, as we grew beyond the dense area of our cities, and as we integrate a technology that was new, we continue to see success. And there's a dashboard link there at the bottom. All of our data is publicly available there. Year over year data as well as ridership trends in case anybody is actually interested in diving a little deeper.

And we knew immediately that the key was not necessarily density as people had always told us, it was more infrastructure. And so, we started to focus more on co-locating with infrastructure rather than density. And that trend really took off for us first in the form of location as standalone park with some great trails.

And then later moving into rural communities that have protected infrastructure as well as trails. So, the model that we spoke about, the P3, that's the public, private, nonprofit model, we're certainly not the first to replicate this model or have in our communities.

But I think we've done a really good job of protecting it, and making sure that everybody has a piece of the pie so that the community as a whole is making sure the goals are worked towards, and everybody has an interest.

So, here BikeWalkKC operates as the umbrella organization that owns and operates the bikes for the community. With RideKC Bike really serving has just the operating program of BikeWalkKC. And then we have the transit authority, various municipalities, counties, and cities, private sponsors, and then Drop Mobility, which is our vendor for the bikes, as well as our software platform.

So, everything is housed as one turnkey service under BikeWalkKC, but running as a program of it through RideKC Bike. So, why would we wanted to do P3? There are some other models out there. There's the private sector that can run this style of program. And then there's also the style where the government is really taking full control, owning and operating.

And there are merits to all the models, but we really like to stick with the P3 where you're getting everybody involved. Diversifying is really crucial. The old adage of don't put too many eggs in one basket. That's really important here in particular. Making sure that we diversify our funding streams, and making it as sustainable as possible for the future. But it also promotes increased ownership.

And this is a very key component. We want to make sure that the municipalities, the private owners that exist within our communities, everybody really has a piece of the program which helps to grow the entire experience. It also helps with resource shared. Every organization has key strengths and weaknesses.

And this really allows us to make sure that we're maximizing what those are for how the partnerships are structured in our unique communities. David with KCATA is a great example. Them as a transit authority have very obvious strengths that we can lean on that us as a small nonprofit organization wouldn't normally have at our disposal if not for their interest in the program.

And so, we try to take full utilization of that, as well as lend our expertise, specifically as an operator to those partners in the community as well.

David Johnson: Yeah. And I'll just add to that by saying, there are communities-- we work with lots of different communities about 10 at the moment. And they vary from cities to counties of with our service contracts. We're a regional provider without our own revenue source. So, we have to contract for service.

And Eric's team has gotten us advanced conversations with communities that we don't currently serve, and vice versa. So, it's very symbiotic. Communities that are interested in transit are quite often also interested in bikeshare.

And like Eric said, they've done a really good job of proving that you don't need density which in a low-density metro like Kansas City is super, super important. I think one of the biggest stumbling blocks, and it also affects transit is this doesn't pay for itself. So, you have to convince someone that an operating subsidy is a good investment.

Eric Vaughan: And as part of that investment, one of the really big upsides here is accountability, and work towards those community goals. One of the major downsides we see with some of the private sector vendors that are out there is that there isn't a lot of accountability or adherence to constantly working towards those community goals specifically.

And so, through working with municipalities, the transit authority is constantly making sure that as a mission-based organization, we're striving to meet those goals and make the program match the community's specific needs. So, I mentioned before, we started off with a station-based technology.

And that was a really good forum for us to start up with when we were just in the more dense part of the city. But quickly as we expand it beyond that, we noticed some problems with that specific model, namely, the scalability and the business model was really difficult to work when you didn't have that density component.

So, we did an RFI to talk with everybody that was in the industry as many of you will remember around this 2018 time, there was a big change in the industry where there's a lot of new companies coming out with new technologies, and we wanted to make sure that we were on the cutting edge of what was coming next.

And namely, in some of the new smart technologies that are out there where the technology is physically on the bikes instead of having the big stations with the docks. And so, as we dove into that, we ended up establishing a relationship with Drop Mobility out of that RFI process so that in 2019, January 2019, we rolled out a pilot program to basically roll these new electric smart bikes and electric scooters out alongside our existing fleet, and study them for a year just watch and see what happened. It gave us a lot of really great data that is very unique.

And with that, I believe we're still the only nonprofit public entity to have our own scooter data. But this new hybrid technology as well, the smart technology is still very new and on the rise. We've seen it come into quite a few cities in the last two years, Colorado Springs, New Orleans, Tulsa, Dayton, Ohio.

So, some other rural communities that are out there, already embracing this as well. And so, what were the problems? I mentioned with the station technology, high capital costs, had high maintenance costs. Made it really difficult for sponsor asked when we're out there communicating with the private business community. And beyond the density area of our city, it was really hard to put a station in literally everywhere that somebody wanted to go.

So, that was part of our nexus of looking at the new technology. On the opposite end of the spectrum, you have true free floating, privately run micromobility. These are a few photos of things that we've seen in our community, and really continue to see on a on a daily basis, unfortunately. But we saw the potential that this type of technology had and the flexibility that it gave people.

We wanted to really see how could we take these negatives that exist around the specific new technology and mitigate those so that we could use them for the betterment of our community. And so, our approach was, let's put lock to technology on everything where you physically have to lock it to something like a bike rack or a geo fenced hub. Build that parking user accountability right into the system.

And you have to actually take a photo of your end trip, showing it locked up properly. I promise you, if you don't do it right, our team will send you a warning because they're very diligent about checking every single photo. We wanted to work directly with cities, transit authorities and private property owners.

This is really key, making sure that we're not just dropping into a community and offering our service. We've heard from the community time and time again that as a service, we need to be there as active participants, and not just someone who wants to put our technology in the streets. And then we also really focused on equipment quality and safety.

The private industry is really about focusing on cost cutting and making sure that the things are as cheap as they can be for lack of a better term. And so, we're really trying to bring more of a public transit model to it where things are very reliably safe, and at the same standard that you would expect from any other public transit mode that you would be stepping on in your community.

So, sourcing technology, that is a higher quality than what we're seeing in a lot of other markets out there right now. And so, what were the results of this pilot program that we went through, really outstanding.

Less than 1% of trips ended parked improperly. And on the private side, we're seeing that more in the 30% to 50% range of trips with the free-floating model that is over a third of users surveyed said that they were using it in conjunction with the other ride KC transit services. 64% ending directly near transit stop.

The big one that I'm really proud of here is zero reported public incidents with any of our electric bikes or scooters. This is something that's been a particular sticking point for a lot of communities around the country, particularly as it pertains to scooters, less so with the e-bikes. But we had a really great success rate with that.

And goes to show you that local proactive operations can make a big impact on how people actually utilize the service. Low cost, we're charging 15 cents a minute for our electric bikes. It's 10 cents a minute lockup rate for our classic pedal bikes. And the alternative options out there are running about 33 or 35 cents a minute.

So, less than half the cost. And we also have a higher rate of deployment in equity neighborhoods. For us, that's the six zip codes that make up the lowest income areas of our city. So, we were deploying at about a 20% rate of our fleet, total fleet. And the other private vendors, I believe we're offering up to 10%. So, considerably more for our equity neighborhoods through this program.

David Johnson: Yeah. And it's important to know if there are equity requirements. And these were requirements as part of Kansas and Missouri's pilot program that that will reduce or increase the cost of the program, right?

So, oftentimes, I think, communities are not aware of the operational costs, and maybe wooed by scooter money, for lack of a better word, because a lot of those companies are venture capital backed. But it's not sustainable to cover up that operational cost with basically paying off cities and communities to allow unfettered access to the public right of way for who knows what purpose.

And so, it's important that communities understand that that's the prevailing business model. And that there's a version of that that is sort of a more public model that Eric has shown that can do better if that's what you want the outcome to be.

If you just want the money, fine, but if you want to change outcomes and provide equitable coverage with devices, then you need to be willing to accept that the operating cost will be higher or that the model is different on the back end.

Eric Vaughan: And so, to add to what David was saying, at the end of 2019, we actually made the decision to discontinue scooters from the fleet. They were not as reported from their performance to-- one, they were less economically sustainable than the electric bikes, the classic bikes in our system, which was very interesting, because the argument from the private sector has been that they are a money maker.

And we very much found the opposite of that. And then, for the electric bikes, we actually showed that they had a significantly higher rate of trends, ridership trends associated with transportation usage. So, specifically, everything we were finding with the scooters on that side was associated with more recreational ridership and less transportation.

So, due to some of those factors, we decided to discontinue the scooters from our fleet, and continue on in the future with electric bikes and classic bikes, although electric bikes will certainly be the priority going forward.

David Johnson: And that's not to say that we believe that scooters aren't an effective first last mile solution, it's just that they appear to be used, for the most part, used differently than a traditional bikeshare system, or the bikeshare system as Eric's team has implemented. So, if you're going to spend public dollars, do it on the one that gives you the best outcome.

And so, because there was a higher percentage of trips ending near transit stops, the trips are longer, and just all those other factors, it made sense to invest there. Now, obviously, the private sector is continuing to invest both …. or still in Kansas City, operating. They are paying fees to several communities now.

They've expanded beyond Kansas City, Missouri. I myself am a first last mile use case because I don't have a car. So, I will often use a scooter to get to and from places in a hurry if one's available. And a bike is not, or a bus is not, or I can't make the trip on foot.

So, we don't want you to walk away thinking we're discounting scooters completely. Just realize that the business model isn't really transparent at this point across the industry. And so, if people come bearing gifts, just know that there is a sustainability question there.

Eric Vaughan: Right. And I'll have that we do still have some of our scooters in anticipation that maybe another community, local community will step forward someday. And one thing for a specific purpose. But for now, we're mostly hearing demand for electric bikes.

And so, for transit integration, we've made a big effort to make sure that we are participating with transit in every way that we can. RideKC Bike is branded that wave specifically as part of the ride KC Transit family, if you will, where every mode here is RideKC, but streetcar bike. So, it makes it really nice from the end user standpoint to identify their mode.

And you can find all the modes in the transit app where we're fully integrated so that if you want to find a bike, you can do it in there, find all your other modes and do route planning. And then once you actually find the bike that you want, it will automatically upload the bike in the right KC bike app so that you're ready to go and get wherever you need right away.

David Johnson: Yeah. And I'm happy to report that as of this month, every single service on this screen will be integrated into the transit app with the exception of RideKC Freedom which is our paratransit service which of course is not sort of general public access. You have to be eligible for that service, but we're thinking about it and working on it.

And the RideKC brand is designed to be just a brand. What you won't see with these logoed services is that you don't know the operator owner behind that service. And that's intentional because at the end of the day, you need to get to where you're going. So, RideKC bus has four distinct operators, but the vehicles and services are integrated, right?

So, RideKC Max has one. That's a convenient example where it's not complex. Streetcar, 1 operator. Bike, 1 operator. Microtransit, 2. Soon to be 3. And again, transit app has been a really great partner. They are what I call integration first as is drop the technology provider for bikeshare now, meaning they want to make sure their app and platform is ready for integration from the beginning, rather than having to be coerced and paid to do it well after the fact and begrudgingly submitting some sort of API.

But we've now been telling partners that we expect integration from the beginning, rather than having to pay for it later. And that's of particular interest to transit agencies who should not be saddled with all of this like science class stuff where we have to become API and technology integration experts because the industry refuses to do it on their own.

Basically, if every agency says integration first, the market will start to respond, and every vendor you work with will now sort of get the message. We haven't been giving that message, and we need to.

Eric Vaughan: And alongside technology integration, we've also co-located a lot of equipment at specific transit hubs, helping to make them micromobility centers. And then a few corridors as well. Prospect Max corridor, we've co-located locations to provide first and last mile transportation for folks there.

We're also seeing more and more ability for trail systems to move people around Kansas City. We have the Mill Creek Trail System out in Johnson County that connects several communities. And we've seen it be quite effective where it's actually moving people from Northern Johnson County all the way to Southern Johnson County without ever having to get off of the trail, just doing it all via bike.

And the same in Kansas City, we have the trolley track trail, a former rail trail, that corridor that links several neighborhoods. We're seeing people utilize these trails for both recreation and transportation.

And so, ridership remains really high on these types of infrastructure because you're getting sort of that double dip of benefit from two forms of ridership utilizing that infrastructure. And trails are something that exists a lot in rural communities that sometimes can be underutilized.

But recently, we've seen some real success cases with that. And I think, looking forward, there are a couple other trails around the Kansas City area that we've been in talks with the local community, as well as the KCATA to get some bikes out there as well, and support both transportation and recreation benefit in those areas.

I think here in the next couple of years, we're going to continue to see that trend. And we're also talking with some other really small communities out in the state of Kansas about some further expansion as well. So, as I mentioned before, we've seen the success beyond the traditional trend, bikeshare community.

And I think the model can be replicated elsewhere as long as there is the correct model employed and also co-located with that just right infrastructure that you probably have already. So, here's my contact information.

I know there'll be questions at the end, but if anybody wants to email me as well, feel free. And if you haven't tried an e-bike before, I look forward to see you out riding soon, hopefully.

Andrew Carpenter: Awesome. Thank you both. And so, while Lisse gets her presentation cued up, this is a great transition from you mentioning of the trails which will be very relevant in this case, and how this works in small communities.

And a point I failed to make earlier, but which is especially critical in this context is there's a lot of focus on the technology on the bike. But it's important to remember that the vehicle and the bike itself is technology.

And so, bikes are the most efficient machines that have been made so far. So, it's worth remembering that as you think about propulsion systems and whatnot. Your feet are great ones as well. So, with that, I'll hand it off to Lisse.

Lisse Regehr: Thank you, Andrew. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Lisse Regehr. And I'm the president and CEO of Thrive Allen County. And we are a small nonprofit located in Southeast Kansas.

We were established in 2007 when a group of volunteers got together and said, "We are tired of seeing the brain drain and the decline in our small rural community." And we have since grown from 2007 to a staff of 18 today. We focus on health, wellness, recreation, education and economic development.

So, truly, the whole health of a community and quality of life for rural communities. And our vision is that Allen County, which has a population of 12,500 spread over 505 square miles will be the healthiest rural county in Kansas. I like to call that my job security, because we have a long ways to go. Just for context, Allen County, we'd like to say that we are truly rural.

We are two hours from any metropolitan area, whether that's two hours north to Kansas City, two hours east of Wichita. So, excuse us, South of Kansas City. We really are that like typical rural model of a very small community that really has to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. Our region in Southeast Kansas is the poorest area of the state.

It has the worst health outcomes. So, we have a lot of barriers that we are working to overcome. And one of the things we truly understand about our small communities is that small towns will not survive unless people want to live there.

It's so obvious. But what we really have to do in our communities, is really ask that question. What do people want in order to move to our community or stay in our community?

And so, what we do at Thrive is we hold community conversations in every single town in our county. We do this every year, a community a month. And we ask our community members, what are your dreams for your town and for our county, what are the barriers that you're facing, what would you like to see, how can we work with you?

And through these conversations, one of the things that very early on and in the inception of these conversations that the bubble to the top was we need safe places to walk and bike, because there tends to be this misperception about rural communities that, "Well, you're in a small community, so it's easy to walk, and it's easy to bike." But it's actually the exact opposite. We just don't have the infrastructure.

We don't have sidewalks, in a lot of cases. We definitely don't have bike lanes. And we don't even, at times, have the lighting that we need at night to safely walk. I know this because I experienced this every evening when I walk with my sister in the evenings.

So, one of those ways that we decided at Thrive, that we would start working to create these more accessible areas and safe areas for our community to be out in was through trails. And so, in the past decade, thrive has worked with our community to create more than 40 miles of trails and routes. We like to call ourselves the King of Trails in Allen County.

And we're very, very proud of this. The Lehigh Portland trails you see here are kind of our gem. And I could go into a lot of detail, but I won't. What I will tell you is through these trails, we really started to create a bike culture in Allen County.

And because we created a bike culture, we were able to recruit a bike store that was in the Kansas City area to open in Iowa, which is the county seat of Allen County, and our largest town and Allen County.

And when that bike store opened, we decided we wanted to make sure that we could really work off of them in our community and in multiple ways, one, try and promote them and get more people to purchase bikes from them but, two, utilize them because we wanted more people out on the trails.

And so, for years at Thrive, we've been looking to our urban brothers and sisters around us with the bikeshare models that they had. And we love what we saw, but we knew our community could not support that. As I said, we are a poor community.

And so, what we decided to go with after getting prices on what it would cost to get a system where you use a credit card to check by fund and out, it was completely not feasible for our community to do that. And so, we said, we will work basically off of a lending library model.

And so, for our first bikeshare, what we did is we bought 5 bikes from the bike store, we bought the bike rack, we put up signage, and we put them in front of our office, which is not what is pictured here. But our office on the Downtown Iowa Square, which we like to say is the largest square West of the Mississippi.

So, come check us out in Iowa, Kansas. But so is a very accessible area. And thrive is one of the very trusted organizations in our community where people come in to get care coordination. So, if they need food assistance, utility assistance, if they need help with health insurance, Medicare, Medicaid.

So, we already had people coming into our building constantly. And so, we were that first point of access that was very easy for people to get to check out a bike. So, when we first thought about this bikeshare model, we really thought what we wanted to do was bring people who were visiting family in town or visiting our community for the first time, a way to experience our trails in our community by bike instead of just driving around. And so, we thought this will be great for tourism.

We also thought, "Oh, this will be great to get people that bicycle grin." That feeling you get when you haven't been on a bike since you were a kid. And all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, my God. This is freedom. And I love it."

So, those were kind of expectations about how this program would be used. The reality ended up being very different. And it really highlighted what we knew was a massive issue in our county which was the lack of public transportation. What you see on the left side of your screen here, the first day we opened up our bikeshare, 5 bikes in front of our office, that's all we had.

The 3 bikes on the left of the screen were checked out that day by a mom and her 2 children. This is the federally qualified health center. They took the bikes to get to a doctor's appointment. And what we saw over and over and over again, was that these bikes were not used for tourism. They were not used for fun. They were used for necessity.

They were used for people who needed to get to work, they were used for people who needed to go to the grocery store, for people who need to go to the doctor's offices. And believe it or not, for people who needed to go to the emergency room, which I'll go into in just a little bit.

So, this program really started to show us in more just starker ways than we ever thought it could just what the need was in our community for these bikes. So, over time, we were able to grow this program from those 5 bikes to more than 55 bikes that we currently have spread out across our county, across nine locations.

And we continue to grow those. We've really worked with the community to figure out the places where these bikes are needed. We put them in very small town. Savonburg is a town of about 68 people. They're a very large homeschooling community. Their library is the focal point of that community. So, they have bikes at that community. And those bikes are used.

The Marmaton Market which you see kind of towards the right hand, upper right-hand part of the screen there, that is a local grocery store in a town of 500 that houses these bikes so people can use the bikes to get groceries.

We have them at the community college, which is the largest user of the bikeshare program because they have international students who have no form of transportation once they get to our community. And so, these bikes are a lifeline for them. We have them in local industries, we have two industries that asked for us to put our bikeshare stations in front of their industries because their employees needed reliable transportation.

So, what we've done is really work with the businesses in our community, the entities, organizations in our community that we knew were trusted, that we knew could manage this program. So, currently, our bikeshare spread out of over about 100 square mile area. We have some other locations. We already know we want them in.

And so, we're currently working on that as well. Our model is very simple. It truly utilizes a lock and key system and a Google Doc. When I say that we are a bootstrap community, I mean that we do not have funding for transportation. We do not have funding to make really amazing awesome projects.

I am jealous of what they've got in Kansas City, but I am very proud of what we have here. And this is what works for us. And so, this program for us has really been funded mainly through grants. Thrive is about 95% grant funded. Our current budget is about $2.6 million.

And so, we have been able to find a lot of grants to make this program work, but some things I'd like to share with you, it doesn't just have to be grants. It can take about, let's say, $5,000 for the first bikeshare, as we would call it kind of a bike in a box, bikeshare in a box area to get set up with the 5 bikes and the racks and the equipment that you need for that.

It can be less than that. It can be a lot less than that, depending on who you're working with. You can have donors, you can have industries fund you or they'll sponsor you. You can go through grants. You can go through health insurance entities. There are all kinds of people who want to partner on these kinds of projects.

And I'm going to be really honest. I like to call this program sexy. Funders love this program. They love to talk with us about it. They love to see the data we can show them about our users and where people are taking the bikes.

We've made it as simple as possible because the more onus we put on our locations to check in and out the bikes, the less likely we are to get those locations to truly buy into our program. And so, we know in our rural communities that we truly need to make this as easy as possible, streamline it and just say, "Here it is. You can roll with it." No pun intended, but there it was.

And get it off and running. Second, bikeshare can save lives. And that picture I wish I told you to hold in your mind, the bike in front of the ER, that was a picture that was taken when one of our regular bikeshare users.

His name is Mark. He started to exhibit symptoms of a heart attack. And instead of calling the ambulance, as I say, "You call the ambulance, please. Don't ever ride your bike to the ER if you think that you are having a heart attack." But he truly knew he could not afford an ambulance. And so, again, to show kind of the brokenness in our system down here, he knew he couldn't afford it.

And as his symptoms got worse, his niece kept begging him to go call the ambulance and he finally said, "I can't. You know I can't. But I have the bike out front. I'll ride the bike to the ER." which, again, my sister-in-law is a PA, and she'd say, "Please, God, don't ever do that." But he did. And he literally walked that bike into the ER and said, "Hi, I think I'm having a heart attack.

And can you please call Thrive Allen County and let them know that their bike is here?" Our bikeshare users love these bikes. They understand how necessary they are for transportation. I'd like to report that Mark is good. He was just fine after they worked on him. And he is still a user of our bikeshare program to this day.

In fact, I'll continue his story in a minute. But these bikeshare bikes truly became our public transportation here in Allen County. The other thing-- and the guys mentioned this, even in Kansas City area, you've got to pivot to where your community needs you to be. Every community is different. Different models work in different communities.

The way that the checkout works can be different. And we work with communities across Kansas and Nebraska. And in fact, across the nation to set up rural bikeshare programs like this. And they all do it differently. And we say, "This is what works for us, but that doesn't mean it's going to be exactly what works for you."

And we are big believers of pivoting and making sure that you are truly aligned with what your community needs. One of the biggest successes we've had this year is we were able to create in partnering with Allen County government, the first ever public transportation system since probably the trolley in our area.

And so, now, anyone in the community can call on-demand and access public transportation between basically in 4:30. One of the things, because Thrive was involved in this that we did was when we ordered the bus which you see in front of you for the county to use, we made sure that on the back of it.

And I'm sorry you can't see it, but there is a bike rack on the back of this bus, because we wanted to make sure that that loop was connected and close that you could be transported in this vehicle, but you could also take your bike with you to get further than where perhaps the bus could take you. And so, we truly believe in that integration.

And in a rural community, that integration looks very different than in an urban area. But it is still there and we are very proud of that. I mentioned that we work across Kansas and Nebraska through a program provided by United Methodist Health Ministry Fund where we are able to actually roll out our bikeshare program in their communities for free to them.

And then we have worked through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Kansas to do the same and programs that they provide throughout Kansas. And then we've been then tours in Tennessee and Oklahoma and New York and other states to assist them in rolling out their first bikeshare programs in their rural communities as well. And we're very proud of that because we know how valuable these bikeshare programs are.

And to kind of wrap up Mark's story that I was telling you about, one of the things I'm so proud about that we instituted this year as our bikeshare fleet is getting older. So, we started this in May of 2017 is when we first started our bikeshare program.

And as our bikes are getting older, we want to cycle them out of our bikeshare system and bring on new bikes in their place. And as we're doing that, what we decided we would like to do is an earn a bike program.

And so, we offer for anyone in our community who would like to be put on a waitlist, that they can be put on this waitlist, and they go through a maintenance class with our biking trails coordinator. And that biking trails coordinator teaches them how to maintain a bike. And once they go through that class, they get that bike for free.

And so that way, we have so many long-term users of our bikeshare program. This truly allows them to own their own bike which is for so many of our community members, it's just out of reach for them monetarily. And so, they are so excited. And they are so proud to have these bikes.

And it is just one more way that we ensure that our community stays mobile, and that they have multiple ways of getting where they need to go in our community. And so, that was in a very quick nutshell because I know that we're getting short on time. Thrives transportation. Bikeshare program. This is my information.

I know it's very different than what they're able to provide in Kansas City. But for any of you in very small, very rural communities, I can guarantee you that this program has worked so well for us and the other communities that have been able to model it. And it has literally saved people's lives. And I am so proud of it. And I thank you all for allowing me to share it with you today.

Andrew Carpenter: All right. Thank you so much. And so, I'm going to put up all of our contact information so you can reach out to any one of us and follow up with any other questions. And I think one, a bunch of questions have been coming in through the Q&A box. And I saw David and Eric were answering a few of them.

But as an overall question for both Allen County and Kansas City is if someone is a, let's say, a transit agency wants to begin looking at micromobility and how it might integrate into their system, where and how do they start? And then vice versa, if it's a Thrive Allen County style nonprofit operating venture, what should they do to get started if there's a transit in their area?

Eric Vaughan: You know, every community is really unique. And probably one of the best things to do is if you have the ability to do a bikeshare feasibility study, because not only will that tell you what's best for your community actually outline a specific implementation plan and make recommendations on the model that's best for your community as well.

So, that's something that would be an easy starting place if there's funding available. Other than that, we also-- BikeWalkKC offer some resources as well around bikeshare planning specifically for our community and share across the board with the national organization, NABSA, North America Bikeshare Association who also has their own resources as well.

Lisse Regehr: And I'd say on the small, very small community, nonprofit side, first, I'd like to say that Thrive is more than happy always. We've been doing this for years to share everything we have on our bikeshare model. We share our Google Doc forms, we share our waivers. We share everything. Our way of doing our bikeshare program is it's free.

People bring in an ID, we scan it, and they get the bike for 24 hours. Once we get to know that they're a good user, they can check it out longer. Most of our users are long term users now where they check it out for days or a week at a time. As long as we have a few that are able to be around for people who stop in on occasion, but we just know that our community just really can't support paying.

And so, we get ours completely funded through grants. But what I would say, I think in rural communities, you're pretty aware of what the transportation barriers and needs are. And where people could really use that. I first would actually say one of the biggest things to look at is your workforce where people struggling to get to work, or people struggling to get to the grocery store, or people struggling to get to doctor's appointments.

Those are the organizations and the entities I would reach out to first, and ask them, "Do you have an idea of the need of your consumers or your employees?" because they will. And that will give you a really good place to start. And then, yeah. And I really do recommend, if you're looking for a bootstrap option, we can-- reach out to us because we'll get you everything that we have.

We truly believe that if you don't have to reinvent the wheel, don't. Nonprofit struggle enough as it is. So, we just want to make it as easy as possible, because we know how helpful this program can be.

David Johnson: Yeah. And the only thing that I would add to that is the story of bike walk was born in advocacy. And myself coming from advocacy, I really relate to that. And I think, find people who are passionate about biking, and hopefully, they'll be able to translate that into some other sort of broader community goal.

It's really interesting to see Kansas embrace sort of recreational biking, or sort of trails and things like that. And it's proving much like it does on the Missouri side that there's a market for that. So, find those people who are passionate about biking, in general, and see if you can tap that into grassroots support for a bikeshare system, which as we've seen in Allen County, could then graduate to real transit that can connect people to opportunities.

Eric Vaughan: I want to add, though. I think there is a business case for bikeshare to be made. We provide a really valuable service. And for the money invested for the people that were moving, there is a high reward for that. Our farebox recovery rate, even though we're setting our prices extremely low is still higher than a lot of other things that we're subsidizing out there in the community.

And so, I think, when we're talking to leadership in our communities, I don't think we need to be apologetic about our service because we do bring high value for the money that we're asking for, whether you're doing it on a basically free mode like Lisse, or more on a public traditional public transit business model like what we're doing.

I think there is that element to it where we're bringing social entrepreneurship to it in a sense. And also, a really valuable service to our community.

Andrew Carpenter: Awesome. And so, one more question. And then Heidi Owl in the Q&A, Heidi's asking for GVfs. And so, I'll look into finding some links for you if you send me an email on that. Other that one, one more question before we go just because we're a little bit over time is one of the things that we focus on is being able to scale different options for folks and different technologies.

And so, we talked about how there are two different models that you both have approached. But Eric and David, you've mentioned that you have spoken to a lot smaller places that are incorporating the RideKC approach.

And so, how do you scale that down? And I think you touched on it about co-locating with infrastructure, but how do you kind of show that to other folks who are interested in scaling that?

Eric Vaughan: Yeah. The main benefit to our new technology we've implemented in the smart bikes is that it's significantly more scalable than our old model. Our old model, we were talking in $50,000 to $75,000 per location as a starting point. Now, we're talking about $2,000 per bike as a scalable starting point, and that's for the electric smart bikes, not classic.

And so, that really enables us to put a lot more resources in a lot more places. And also, scale to the specific size of the project easily so that it doesn't matter if you're a small community that wants just one hub for a very specific purpose at that community center, or on a small community campus that we can do that, or we can scale it up and do more wherever you were community happens to have those natural connections that have the demand in there for it.

So, one of our top performing hubs year in and year out continues to be at Longview Lake. And it's completely by itself. There's nothing near it within 15 or 20 miles, yet, it's continuing to get a lot of ridership and it's because of the use case of that single hub being near some really great infrastructure that happens to be popular with people.

So, it doesn't matter whether you're doing one location with 10 bikes, or if you're doing 10 hubs. There's a use case for them all.

David Johnson: Yeah. And I would encourage people to stay flexible. I think that's the case for all of us really here is, even if you have a business model, be open to other alternatives. I mean, Eric has agreements where they don't even own the bikes. And our RideKC family has a variety. Some services are contracted out, some or directly operated, some are separately funded and governed.

And so, we try to maintain as much flexibility as possible, and that may seem hard if you're scraping around for resources, but it builds on itself. And when people know that you're flexible, they may come to you with interesting ideas that may surprise you.

Andrew Carpenter: Excellent. And then for Lisse to go in the opposite direction if you're scaling up, do you see a point where the system could get too big to be the library model, and you might have to have to change it up and pivot as you mentioned earlier?

Lisse Regehr: Yeah. So, we are at 55 bikes. That includes a couple of trikes, couple of pedicabs. We've really tried to diversify our fleet to make sure that anyone in our community can have access to it. And we had to bring on a biking trails coordinator this year because it has grown so large. And so, we will continue to have to figure out how to grow with that, and how to make that work.

And again, being under grants is always a little scary, because that grant disappears. And then what's the next funding? And so, part of what we're doing now is really building that case study. So, if for some reason one of those grants that we rely on consistently for this funding is to go away, that we've got industrial support, local support that they would come in and also help with that.

But, yeah, I could see a time when that might not be as feasible, and we will continue to grow and pivot and to figure out what works best during that time. I mean, one of the things I love about what they do in KC is these are bikes that can be checked out without having to walk into an organization, which means we could have them literally like out on the trails, which would be beautiful.

Right now, we don't have that. Again, funding is always going to be an issue for us. But one of the nice things in a rural community is getting people to go inside those businesses and getting them to frequent those businesses. And so, that's one of the things we're always working on, too, is how to bring the two together to benefit each other, that business, and the bike share model, and the user as well.

Eric Vaughan: And I'll add that we actually have one example of a bike library within our own system where we're working with a social service organization who deals with folks that are often unbanked and don't have a smartphone to test a bike. And so, they're actually stocking some on-site, and people come in physically check them out. So, doing exactly what they're doing just a little bit differently.

Andrew Carpenter: Well, thank you all so much for your time today. And then thank you to our audience for joining us. And so, I'll make sure that I share or I save all of the questions in here, but looks like we got to most of them. And so, Tom, I will make sure we get back to you on that. And so, again, everyone feels free to reach out to us with any follow up questions that you have.

We're happy to answer anything, and then and to connect you to any resources that you need to get started. So, we're excited to begin getting bikeshare farther out into the transit world and get more people thinking about it. And so, you'll see a lot more from NCATT on that. And then we look forward to hearing everyone's questions on it. So, thank you all again. And have a lovely afternoon.