



CONNECTIONS

Office of Public Transit Newsletter • January 2004

2003 Banner year for improvement projects at terminals

Managers of Iowa's transit systems and intercity bus carriers are convinced that better passenger waiting amenities are critical to customer satisfaction and improved transit patronage. The year 2003 has been a banner one for the initiation and completion of four local projects to markedly improve terminals used by intercity bus patrons.

Also, demolition work and ground breaking began in Iowa City on a \$13.2 million transportation center that will serve local fixed route patrons, as well as provide ticketing and passenger waiting areas for patrons to use the national network of intercity bus routes. In addition, Intercity Bus Assistance has now been approved to assist Greyhound Lines in making passenger ticketing and waiting more pleasant when using intercity bus

[Improvement projects](#), see page 14



Sioux City's new Martin Luther King, Jr., Transportation Center


Over the past year, the Office of Public Transit's (OPT) staff has assisted transit managers in Sioux City, Cedar Rapids, Dubuque and Iowa City with efforts to launch or complete projects that have already, or will soon improve ticketing and waiting areas used by intercity bus patrons. Sioux City was able to dedicate its new \$11.6 million Martin Luther King Jr. Transportation Center last April using Intercity Bus Assistance funding administered by the OPT to augment direct Federal Transit Administration grants and Amoco Loan assistance.

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Director's Column

By Michelle McEnany



Happy New Year! At this time of year many of us are making resolutions and setting goals for the new year. In doing so, we often need to look back at where we've been and determine what has and hasn't worked for us. The Office of Public Transit (OPT) is looking forward to many opportunities in 2004 to continue to work with the Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA), and transit managers and staff in an effort to promote and enhance public transit.

Many of you know that enhancing the image of public transit in Iowa has been the main focus of the OPT marketing efforts this past year. We are pleased with our accomplishments in this area, such as securing a booth at the Iowa State Fair last August to distribute brochures and other promotional materials to more than 10,000 people that visited our booth.

The OPT Web site has been redesigned to reflect the creation of the new office logo, along with adding features to make the site more manageable for staff and more user friendly for visitors to the site. (See article page 9.)

We plan to continue our efforts in 2004 to increase public awareness, and

educate the public on the availability of public transit in Iowa and the important role it plays in connecting people to their communities and services.

Along with public awareness, we made a concentrated effort to educate decision makers about the current and potential impact policy decisions have on public transit in Iowa. Educational efforts included surveys, brochures, news releases, television commercials and newspaper advertising. Our efforts are focused on showing the human side of transit and how transit provides an important transportation choice that enhances quality of life for all Iowans. OPT worked with IPTA to help educate the Congressional delegation of the state's need for at least \$7 million per year in transit capital funding to support vehicle replacement needs.

OPT sponsored training in the areas of "Train-the Trainer Passenger Assistance Techniques" for certified trainers (mobility aid securement, passenger restraint, sensitivity training, and risk of operator injury), "Braun Lift Maintenance Training," and "Air Conditioning Repair." These training opportunities are in addition to the orientation provided to managers new to Iowa's transit program. We also partnered with IPTA in

sponsoring training in the area of personnel policies, "Focusing on Excellence for Managers." Our office plans to continue to sponsor training during 2004 in areas such as transit operator fatigue, drug and alcohol program requirements, and safety and security.

The OPT is currently in the process of reviewing the formula for distribution of state transit assistance with the assistance of a committee representing each category of public transit system in the state. The goal is to determine if the formula is aligned with the state's mission for public transit and to make a recommendation to the DOT for change, if warranted. This committee will continue to meet to discuss and review options in an effort to determine whether or not a change is needed in the distribution formula. We appreciate the many comments from Iowa transit managers and their willingness to provide input in this forum.

OPT and the Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) at Iowa State University have just concluded a study of the benefits of coordination between public transit and public school systems. The study steering committee included representatives from public transit, as well as a state Department of Education (DOE) representative. Coordination has the potential to create efficiencies and decrease costs, while provid-

ing needed services.

OPT has also secured funding for two more studies that will begin shortly. The first is a statewide transit facility needs study, which will help local transit systems and the state anticipate future capital funding requirements. The second is an urban transit intelligent transportation systems (ITS) study to look at what transit ITS elements each Iowa urbanized area is seeking to deploy and how these deployments can be integrated with Iowa's statewide rural ITS network that is currently underway. Updates on these studies will be featured in future newsletters.

OPT's staff has been instrumental in assisting transit agencies with their implementation of numerous projects. Over the past year more than 90 new revenue service vehicles were purchased with the assistance of OPT's transit program administrators. In addition, staff assisted more than half of Iowa's 35 public transit systems in implementing capital projects that will dramatically improve vehicle cleaning, service quality and ticketing of intercity bus passengers. (See front page.)

[Director's Column](#), see next page

Director's Column, from previous page

In an effort to streamline paperwork and take advantage of electronic technology, OPT staff has been working with the DOT's Modal Division Support Team to allow transit systems to submit certain reporting information through a Web-based environment to our databases. This process is anticipated to save both time and money for all users. The inventory form and statistical report may be ready for use as early as this spring. OPT plans to continue to explore the use of electronic forms for reporting purposes in 2004. (See article page 13.)

My staff and I are always open to suggestions about ways we can partner, promote and enhance public transit in Iowa. State and community decision makers are invited to visit our Web site, iatransit.com, or contact the OPT or transit managers around the state to learn more about the importance and impact of their decisions on public transit. We look forward to a new year of opportunities in the public transit program.

Michelle

Reauthorization of Federal Transit Programs

The authorization of the federal transit programs expired Sept. 30, 2003, without Congress proposing a new authorization bill. Instead, a five-month extension of the previous authorization, known as TEA-21, was passed, keeping the transit programs going through Feb. 29, 2004. In late November the reauthorization committee of the House of Representatives finally introduced its proposal entitled "Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users" or "TEA LU." The Senate has indicated it intends to introduce its version sometime after Congress reconvenes in January.

The House proposal includes some of the key features this department has been suggesting be included in the reauthorization package. These include:

- Increased funding for public transit – the House proposal would double the total federal transit funding over the six-year period of the bill. This does not necessarily mean that Iowa's share would double, but the chances are better than if the total were not being increased.
- Guaranteed authorizations – the House proposal would continue the principle of guaranteeing that the authorized funds will actually be appropriated. Under TEA-21 about 85 percent of the authorized transit funding was guaranteed, and this ended up being all that was appropriated. The House

proposal provides that all transit funding would be guaranteed for the six-year period of the bill.

- "Transit Intensive Cities" program – the House proposal includes a provision to provide additional funding to communities with populations between 50,000 and 200,000, which have very high levels of ridership. Currently, funding for these areas is based strictly on population and population densities rather than on the basis of the amount of service being provided. This change will bring them more in line with how the federal government distributes funding to areas over 200,000 population, and how this department distributes funding to areas under 50,000 population.

Two other significant features of the House reauthorization proposal include:

- Formula distribution of Job Access funding – the Job Access funding was a new program under TEA-21 to start new transit services to help low income persons get to jobs and get off welfare. Under TEA-21 it was a discretionary program and was mostly being earmarked by Congress. Iowa was fairly successful in getting some of those earmarks, but many states and communities received nothing.

Under the House proposal the program would be allocated to states and larger urbanized areas on the basis of low-income population. It is unclear exactly how much money Iowa might receive, but the funding would be more stable than was previously the case.

- "New Freedom" program – the House proposal would establish a new program to fund innovative transportation services for persons with disabilities and transit services that exceed the ADA mandates.

A major concern is that the House proposal does not specify the source of the funding for its transit or highway features. There continues to be no agreement on whether these should be funded through an increase in federal fuel taxes, through bonding, or by some other means.

Hopefully, by our next edition we will be able to report that a reauthorization bill has been passed and discuss the highlights of that bill. If not, we will discuss the Senate's proposal for reauthorization and how that may vary from the House version.

Added benefit for Ottumwa riders



Ottumwa Bus Passenger Transfer Station

Just a few months after construction was started Ottumwa Transit Authority's (OTA) bus passenger transfer station became operational. The new transfer station is located at the corner of Main and Market streets in Ottumwa.

McClure Engineering of Fort Dodge designed the bus passenger transfer station and helped develop specifications for construction. They also assisted OTA staff throughout the initial stages, including bid letting and evaluation. In addition to McClure Engineering, OTA staff received assistance during the construction phase of the project from the city of Ottumwa's engineering and inspection department staff.

Bids were opened Dec. 18, 2001, and construction was initiated in the spring of 2002.

Grooms and Company Construction, Inc., an Ottumwa-based company, was the successful bidder for construction of OTA's Transfer Station.

The transfer station was sheltering its first passengers Aug. 6, 2002. The bus passenger transfer station cost about \$114,000 and was funded through enhancement funds from the Surface Transportation Program. Local match was provided by the city of Ottumwa from funds designated for downtown revitalization.

OTA Administrator Pam Ward noted, "We hope that our passengers will enjoy using the new bus transfer station. There has been a real need for a structure where transit customers can get out of the weather while waiting for the bus. The new station is ready for use, and I believe it will be a great benefit for our riders."

Brush up on safe driving practices or take advantage of public transit

Did you know the American Automobile Association (AAA) is promoting a safer driving habit campaign called "Drive for Life: The National Safe Driving Test & Initiative"? The focus of the campaign is making drivers more aware of the need for safe driving habits.

Law enforcement and education groups have joined forces to get the message out to the public that "safety requires three things: safe cars, safe roads and safe drivers." An interactive Web site, safedrivingtest.com, provides an opportunity for drivers to reassess their driving knowledge. Visitors to the site can brush up on safe driving practices with a quick test, take a driving personality quiz and learn about keys to safe driving.

Here is another approach. Leave the driving up to one of Iowa's professional public transit drivers. Riding public transit can alleviate the worry of dreaded winter driving, traffic congestion and rush hour traffic, while allowing you to sit back, relax, and have a more enjoyable ride.

Wherever life takes you... Ride with us! Visit our Web site, iatransit.com, for more information about public transit in Iowa.

Iowa's Living Roadway

Have you ever wanted to know what those purple flowers are along the edge of the highway? A new book from the Iowa Department of Transportation provides information about Iowa's living roadways free of charge. The 132-page, spiral-bound book includes photos of 41 wildflower and native grass species, 33 trees and 16 shrubs, all used by the DOT's roadside management program. For a free copy of "Iowa's Living Roadway Plant Profiler" visit www.dot.state.ia.us and look under "What's New". Please note: books are printed on demand; therefore delivery may take several weeks.



Iowa Transit Systems' Environmental Initiatives

Part two

In the last issue of *Connections*, information about ethanol-blended gasoline (gasohol) and the environmental benefits of ethanol injection was discussed. It was noted that Iowa's 35 transit agencies began using gasohol in most of the statewide gas-fueled transit vehicle fleet even prior to enactment of Senate File 545 in 1991. In this article we will discuss biodiesel as an alternative fuel source.

At last count, nine of Iowa's public transit systems have used a soybean derivative (methyl soyate) blended with conventional non-renewable diesel fuel. At present, five systems are making rather substantial use of soydiesel blended using 5 percent (B5), 10 percent (B10), or 20 percent (B20) methyl soyate. Five Seasons Transportation and Parking (FST&P) in Cedar Rapids, Iowa City Transit (ICT), University of Iowa Cambus and Sioux City Transit —are continuing use of B10 or B5 soydiesel in their entire diesel transit vehicle fleet. Trial use began in 2002 at Bettendorf Transit with 2,500 gallons of B20 soydiesel and another 2,500 gallons was used in 2003. A sixth transit system, Rides, a regional transit agency based in Spencer, is making trial use in a service vehicle of B20 since it is available at a local vendor's pump.

The Iowa transit system with the most extensive use of diesel fuels formulated with methyl soyate has been in Cedar Rapids. FST&P is a city of Cedar Rapids department that operates public transit and administers downtown parking. From 1993 to 1996, FST&P performed a three-million-mile test of B20 fuel use in its diesel buses. However, the cost of soydiesel climbed to \$4.50 per gallon in 1996, making it unfeasible to continue use of B20 until methyl soyate prices declined to affordable levels. Presently, 74 FST&P buses use a B10 blend of soybean-based biodiesel in tandem with hydrous ethanol injection. FST&P's use of these value-added products in tandem produces emission reductions that are greater than the benefits of using these products separately. For FY2004, FST&P's use of methyl soyate is projected to be about 26,000 gallons, provided that B10 soydiesel prices remain reasonably constant.

That combination has made Cedar Rapids diesel bus fleet's tailpipe emissions far cleaner than California emissions standards. FST&P is also using biosoy hydraulic oil developed by the University of Northern Iowa at its Waverly biosoy research facility.

In addition to FST&P's ongoing use of soydiesel, Iowa City Transit and the University of Iowa Cambus began using B5 soydiesel to fuel their bus

fleets starting in March 2002. Both agencies plan to continue B5 use throughout FY 2004. With ICT's 22-bus fleet and Cambus' 27-bus fleet using B5 fuel, it is estimated that these systems have now logged about two million miles using B5 fuel. And, during FY 2004, they will jointly log 1.2 to 1.3 million miles. Combined consumption of methyl soyate by these two transit systems, as of Nov. 30, 2003, has been about 18,000 gallons of this value-added agriculture co-product. And, for FY 2004, it is anticipated that their combined use of methyl soyate will be about 13,000 gallons, provided that the supply of properly blended B5 is uninterrupted and remains affordable.

Sioux City Transit (SCT) began using B5 soydiesel to fuel its 39-bus fleet in April 2002. Use was temporarily discontinued in December 2002 due to limited supplier competition and concerns about whether incomplete fuel blending during the coldest months of winter could lead to jelling problems and road calls. Use of B5 was resumed in April 2003. Annual consumption of methyl soyate by SCT may be about 5,000 gallons if properly blended B5 is available and remains affordable.

Three other Iowa public transit systems participated in a soydiesel demonstration project led by the Iowa DOT in 1995. The transit systems involved were Ames Transit Agency (d/b/a CyRide), the Metropolitan Transit Authority of Black Hawk County (d/b/a MET Transit), and Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission. Soydiesel fuel use was undertaken in a total of 49 of the vehicles operated by these three transit systems. Their demonstration entailed about 460,000 miles of operation using B20 fuel from January through May 1995. The five-month span of operation in these three demonstration projects achieved reduced exhaust emissions, most notably improved opacity readings. Findings also made it possible to conclude that carefully transported, blended and filtered methyl soyate, B20 (or any lower percent of methyl soyate) blended soydiesel fuel can be used in a wide assortment of transit vehicle makes and models without causing an increase in road calls or reduced acceleration. More specifically the study concluded that B20 could be used:

Initiatives, see page 6

Initiatives, from page 5

- 1) in a diverse assortment of diesel-powered transit vehicles;
- 2) to maximum benefits **only** if rigorously developed protocols for distillation, storage, fuel handling and blending are followed;
- 3) without fuel related in-service vehicle breakdowns or road call increases **only** with proper staff training and careful attention by fuel vendors to handling;
- 4) when soybean prices make it such that B20 or B10 fuel is not prohibitively expensive (fuel costs for the 49 vehicles involved in the 1995 B20 demonstration were 2.19 times greater than the cost of fueling the same vehicles with conventional diesel fuel during the same five-month period); and
- 5) when methyl soyate costs per volume might drop to a level that would make B20 fuel so inexpensive that cost containment measures would not be necessary to offset increased costs of B20 or B10 fuel use.

Watch for information on the use of alternate, non-renewable fuels/energy sources to reduce exhaust emissions in our next Transit Connections newsletter.

Clinton MTA staff happy with new renovations and building expansion

Clinton MTA celebrated its renovated and expanded building and the new storage facility with a ribbon cutting ceremony last February. Speakers included LaMetta Wynn, mayor of Clinton; Mokhtee Ahmad, FTA regional administrator from Kansas City; Peter Hallock, Iowa DOT; Dennis Hart, Clinton MTA Transportation Director; and others.

Clinton had first obtained funding for the design of both facilities, then the funding for construction. Neumann Monson, an architectural firm from Iowa City, designed both buildings during fiscal year 2001. The first bids received in the spring of 2001 were significantly over budget. The city scaled back the project and solicited bids once again in September 2001.

The new storage facility is about 9,600 square feet, and the area between the two buildings can accommodate 11 large and three small buses, as well as two service trucks. The bulk of the cost, nearly \$1 million, is associated with the new building. The renovation project provided a new break room, three additional rooms, as well as a larger space for changing and lockers, combined with new paint, carpet, windows and, in some places, walls. These additions were



Clinton MTA ribbon cutting ceremony, Feb. 7, 2003

done in the old wash bay area. The new washer can automatically power wash every vehicle in the fleet with a spot-free rinse. Maintenance crews have seen the benefits of the under-body flush system, which makes their jobs easier.

Dennis Hart, manager of Clinton MTA, said, "This was quite an extensive construction project. Although it took a considerable amount of time to accomplish, due to having to scale back our original plans and other obstacles, we are very happy with the end results. We've been in the new building for just about a

year now. The renovations and additions have provided greater overall use of our original building and the ability to store more vehicles inside during inclement weather has been good for both our drivers and our passengers."

Taylor Ball from Cedar Rapids was the low bidder at \$1,160,747.00. The final cost after several change orders stands at \$1,186,874.

Support for the provision of intercity bus service in non-urbanized area continues

Federal funding totaling \$612,463 was recently awarded to maintain the viability of intercity bus service in Iowa. This multifaceted program helps preserve existing intercity bus routes that tie Iowa to the rest of the country, and for new feeder routes that give smaller communities not serviced by existing routes access to stops

along those routes. Funding is also used to increase awareness of the intercity bus connections and helps provide upgraded equipment and facilities, including adding accessibility features required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. Marketing of intercity bus routes to increase awareness of the intercity bus connec-

tions is also made possible with assistance from this program.

Three routes classified as "new service" under this program received assistance. Service provided by Burlington Trailways, which runs from Burlington to Mount Pleasant to Iowa City and on to Cedar Rapids, will again receive funding to continue operations. Five Oaks will be funded to continue service it provides between Des Moines and Newton. Jefferson Lines is also funded again to provide service between Missouri and South Dakota, with Iowa stops at Council Bluffs, Onawa, Sioux City, LeMars, Sioux Center and Larchwood.

Other projects awarded part of the \$612,463 in federal funds included a passenger shelter in Fort Dodge and modifications to KeyLine Transit headquarters in Dubuque to accommodate intercity bus passengers, plus the installation of a Greyhound 'Trips' computerized ticketing system. The largest capital item funded is the finish work on a new intercity bus terminal to be operated by Greyhound in Iowa City's new ground transportation center. The selected projects directly support the provision of intercity bus service in Iowa's non-urbanized areas and provide connections for Iowans to the nationwide intercity bus network.

Funding for this program comes out of Iowa's allocation of federal funding for public transportation in non-urbanized areas. The largest portion of the funds is used to preserve existing intercity bus services. The remainder is split between new service, capital and marketing projects.

The intercity bus assistance program is open to private intercity bus companies, firms wishing to start intercity bus service, public transit agencies either operating or proposing to operate intercity bus services or terminals, and local communities wishing to support bus connections to their community.

Projects for calendar year 2004 were awarded to Burlington Trailways, based in Burlington; Five Oaks Charters, based in Des Moines; Greyhound Lines, based in Dallas, Texas; Jefferson Lines, based in Minneapolis, Minn.; the city of Fort Dodge's Dodger Area Rapid Transit (DART), based in Fort Dodge; and KeyLine Transit, based in Dubuque.

Rural transit systems look to technology for efficiency and better service

Transit systems serving rural Iowa are planning installation of what are known as "intelligent transportation systems"—technologies that will allow them to operate more efficiently and improve service to customers.

This will be accomplished by using computers to schedule trips so the number of miles of travel and costs are minimized, and adherence to schedules is vastly improved. This becomes especially important when coordinating service in rural areas where regional transit system territories can range up to 5,000 square miles.

Some installations are expected to employ global positioning systems, data communications technology and mobile data computers in the buses. Combined, these technologies will allow the transit systems to automatically perform tasks that are now done manually. Most of the project funding will come from federal funds earmarked for this purpose by Congress.

The Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit is leading the effort to select a contractor to install these systems throughout Iowa. The actual deployment will be done in phases and is expected to take approximately three years to complete.

Parties interested in finding out more about this project can contact the Office of Public Transit at 515-239-1875 or Iowa Department of Transportation, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, IA 50010. Information related to the request for proposals issued Dec. 22, 2003, may also be found at http://www.iatransit.com/resources/its_rfp_dec03.asp.

The Office of Public Transit will accept proposals for the project until 4:30 p.m., CST, Feb. 12, 2004.

IPTA continues statewide effort to promote public transportation benefits

The Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) is calling upon members of their communities to join them in a statewide effort to promote the benefits of public transportation.

IPTA members plan to continue their grass roots initiatives and schedule meetings with legislative leadership on the home front and at the state capitol. IPTA will hold its annual Legislative Day Wednesday, Feb. 18. IPTA will have a display and educational materials available on the first floor of the Capitol building in the south wing near the Governor's office. Meetings are currently being scheduled with the legislative leadership for IPTA to share its legislative priority for public transit, which is, simply put: fund transit as established by Iowa Code.

Public transportation helps lead the nation toward its goals and policies of protecting the environment, conserving energy, and providing for the health, safety and security of its citizens, as well as making our communities stronger and more vibrant.

Iowa's 19 urban and 16 regional transit systems provide valuable transportation services to citizens in all 99 counties. Pam Ward, IPTA president said, "The public transit system provides Iowans with the transportation choices necessary to maintain access to work, school, medical facilities, meal sites, and recreational and volunteer opportunities in their communities."

Transit can help provide a higher quality of life for Iowans. It clearly benefits those who use it, but even larger benefits accrue to all citizens in the form of economic development, reduced congestion, more livable communities, and cleaner air. The mobility and freedom it provides to individuals is essential for the elderly, persons with disabilities, and transportation limited or disadvantaged; and Iowans for whom transit is their only viable option to get around their communities and the state. For some folks, it makes the difference between living independently and being institutionalized.

"IPTA's members report they continue to face budget deficits due to a reduction in state transit assistance. Most transit systems have seen cuts in local funding due to the state's cuts to the cities and counties and human service agencies that contribute local funding to transit. Many transit systems have had to respond by cutting services or raising fares, and in some cases both," said Mark Munson, IPTA legislative chairman.

State funding has proven to be essential to maintain transit service for Iowans. "Legislators have an opportunity to help continue the vitality of Iowa's public transportation system by providing assistance to Iowa's transit program. Transit services are vital to providing access to opportunities and a higher quality of life for all Iowans," added Munson.

About IPTA

The Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) supports the professional development and improvement of its members by providing industry information, training, technical assistance and other opportunities for networking, collaboration and sharing of ideas and best practices. IPTA strives to develop a common vision regarding which decisions, changes, and methods of support will best benefit the industry as a whole.

IPTA membership is open to designated public transit systems in Iowa. Associate membership is open to agencies providing service under contract to the transit systems, intercity bus carriers, taxi operators, vendors and others.

To find out more about IPTA, visit their website iapublictransit.com or contact Bev Thomas, IPTA's executive director, at 515-440-6057

BOARD OF DIRECTORS' PURPOSE STATEMENT

- Direct the activities of IPTA
- Provide leadership
- Establish priorities and make decisions
- Represent the diverse interests of our members
- Be the "engine" or driving force of IPTA
- Communicate IPTA's mission and activities to members and other entities.

BOARD CONTACTS 2003-2004

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Rural Vice President - Rose Lee

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Legislative Chair-Elect - Walt Stevenson

Waterloo MET, 1515 Black Hawk St., Waterloo, IA 50702
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User-friendly features added to Web site



Our new and improved Web site is up and running. The new Web site was designed to reflect the creation of the new transit logo, along with adding features to make the site more user friendly for visitors to the site and more manageable for staff.

One of the new and improved features includes a search engine that can search terms to match records contained in Web pages, database records, MS Office documents and PDFs.

Another feature includes a dynamic glossary and list of acronyms for the Transit Manager's Handbook. This feature links all terms in the

handbook to their definition in the glossary or acronym list. Visitors to the Web site will be able to browse the handbook by chapter or search the handbook for specific key words.

The "transit updates" have been archived by month and the most current updates will be displayed. This will allow visitors to obtain historical information, if they would like.

We hope you like our new and improved Web site. If you have questions or comments about these changes, please contact our webmaster at pamella.lee@dot.state.ia.us.

Rural transit management position fits Jeff Hanson just fine

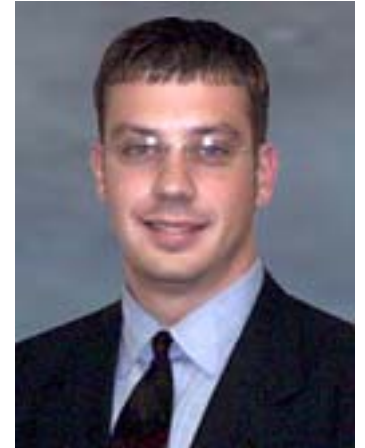
Jeff Hanson, a native of Sioux City, had a plan for his academic and professional career that kept him focused and helped him achieve his career goal at a young age.

Jeff began his professional career with the Siouxland Interstate Metropolitan Planning Council (SIMPCO) as a transportation planning intern in the summer of 1998. Following graduation from Iowa State University with a bachelor of science degree in community and regional planning in July 1999, Jeff returned home to continue his career with SIMPCO as a transportation planner.

One of Jeff's many duties as a transportation planner was to assist with transit planning for the Sioux City Transit System and Region 4/ Siouxland Regional Transit System (SRTS). Jeff says he enjoyed working with both systems and knew someday he would like to continue his career in the transit field.

That opportunity soon presented itself and on July 1, 2002, Jeff began his transit management career by accepting the position of SRTS transit director. Since SIMPCO provides management services for SRTS and Jeff had provided transit-planning services for SRTS, it appeared to be a win-win situation for SIMPCO and SRTS, while fitting quite nicely into Jeff's career goals.

As a transportation planner, Jeff had worked with many of his new transit colleagues and is grateful for the continued support in his



Jeff Hanson, SRTS Transit Director

new position. "The assistance I have received in my new career from other Iowa transit systems and Office of Public Transit staff has been outstanding," Jeff stated. "Everyday I learn something new from the many great 'transit teachers' across the state," added Jeff.

Jeff has learned a lot in a short time since he has actively sought out training and other opportunities available to him to help advance his career. In October 2003 Jeff was appointed as the regional representative to DOT's Public Transit Management System (PTMS) committee.

Jeff and his wife, Susan, live on a small acreage near Lawton and enjoy spending their evenings and weekends outside with their two cats, a dog, and two horses. Jeff also serves as a volunteer firefighter for the Lawton Volunteer Fire Department and enjoys spending his spare time at the fire station.

SRTS serves the counties of Cherokee, Ida, Monona, Plymouth and Woodbury.



Donna Johnson is Talking Transit

Several thousand of our newly created transit activity books have been distributed to kids of all ages across Iowa. The city of Fort Dodge, Dodger Area Rapid Transit System, made them available for school registration activities across their six-county service area of Pocahontas, Humboldt, Wright, Calhoun, Webster and Hamilton counties.

Daniel Jensen, transit manager for Sioux City Transit (SCT), says, "Riders are excited to see some of the new marketing items available to them and we hope that our ridership will increase due to a greater awareness of the services we have to offer." SCT and neighborhood network groups collaborated in helping to spread good tidings in the Sioux City metropolitan area. Santa and his helpers rode SCT's trolley bus to 22 elementary schools to visit with the children and distribute candy, pencils and transit activity books. "This event is something the

children look forward to each year. Weather permitted many students to board the bus and learn more about public transit," said Jensen.

Siouxland Regional Transit System (SRTS) drivers passed out transit activity books and small boxes of crayons to children that rode the SRTS buses on Halloween. Jeff Hanson, SRTS transit manager, says, "They went over great. We'd like to be able to do this again for May Day or some other holiday." SRTS serves the northwest Iowa counties of Plymouth, Cherokee, Woodbury, Ida and Monona.

A big hit for transit riders that purchase monthly bus passes is the card/pass holder with artwork designed by the graphics staff of the DOT. Riders really appreciate this handy little holder designed to help protect their bus passes, while promoting the Office of Public Transit's (OPT) Web site and transit in general. Southern Iowa Trolley (SIT), based in Creston, distributed the cardholders to its elderly riders and children. "Parents love

the new bus pass holders and hope it will help reduce the risk of loss or destruction to their children's bus passes," said Shonda Deranleau, SIT transit manager. SIT serves the counties of Adair, Adams, Union, Clarke, Taylor, Ringgold and Decatur. Several transit systems took advantage of this new marketing item while they were available.

Dave Towne, marketing manager for Five Seasons Transportation and Parking in Cedar Rapids reports they have distributed hundreds of our latest marketing item, adhesive calendar strips. Towne says, "I've taken the calendars to a local senior fair, malls and also handed them out at meetings held at our Ground Transportation Center here in Cedar Rapids." The calendars include our OPT logo, address, phone number, and Web site, and can be adhered to computer monitors, or other things. "The bus pass holders have also gone over very well with FST&P riders," added Towne.

The Clinton MTA promoted "Communities in Motion Day" last October by offering free rides for the day and sponsoring a driver appreciation day. Clinton MTA's transit manager, Dennis Hart, said they also increased their advertising in October to help promote the

event. Communities in Motion is a two-year old program developed by the American Public Transit Association to commemorate public transportation and showcase how transit benefits communities by providing personal opportunity to individuals.

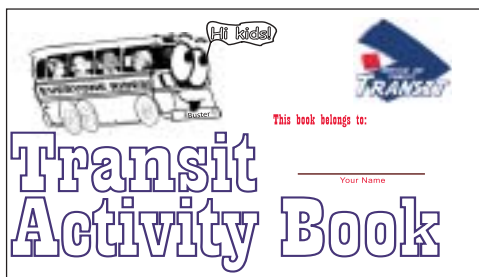
Burlington Urban System (BUS) extended its "Communities in Motion Day" promotion by offering free rides for three consecutive days. In addition, Burlington's city council presented Larry Gantz, BUS transit manager, with a proclamation denoting the week of Oct. 13-17 as "Try Transit Week." During the first day of the promotion all passengers rode for free. BUS sponsored a food fare day on the second day of their event, where passengers rode free when donating a non-perishable food item. Ninety-six food items were received and then donated to a local food pantry. Senior citizens, aged 55 or older, rode for free on the last day of the event. Throughout the event transit activity books and crayons were distributed to elementary school-age children; bus pass holders were offered with bus pass purchases; and our OPT Directory and *Connection*

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Talking Transit, from page 10

newsletters were also made available to riders interested in learning more about public transit in Iowa. The local radio station in Burlington (KBUR AM 1490) provided free media publicity for the event by inviting Gantz to be a guest of the radio station. Gantz took advantage of this opportunity to promote the BUS program and special event with a community event theme spot announcement. These are just a couple of examples of how transit celebrated Communities in Motion Day here in Iowa.

Transit activity books can be ordered by calling our office 515-239-1875. The activity book features "Buster the Bus" with



pictures to color, mazes, word searches and word scrambles to complete while promoting the message "Everyone rides...even kids!"

You can also obtain brochures containing a list of public transportation services with contact information; a map showing regional boundaries of rural transit systems, intercity bus routes and Amtrak stops in Iowa, along with their contact information; and commercial airport locations by calling our office.

It has been a pleasure working with transit managers across Iowa and with the Iowa Public Transit Association this past year. I hope that together we can continue to enhance the image of public transit in the new year. Although public transit systems in Iowa provided over 22 million rides last year, it is important to remember that our riders aren't just numbers; they are real people with transportation needs and a desire to be part of their local community.

Transit helps us, our neighbors, friends, and loved ones get to jobs, school, medical appointments, shopping and recreation. It helps people from all walks of life accomplish what is important to them. It makes a real difference in the lives of individuals and is vital to the quality of life of all citizens. We all benefit from public transit, either by using the services ourselves, or in the form of economic development, reduced congestion, more livable communities and cleaner air.

It is a privilege to be a part of a program that serves those members of our community that are dependent upon public transit services to not only enhance their quality of life, but to touch the lives of those around them. May we all have a safe and healthy Happy New Year!

Riverbend Transit helps to make a young man's wish come true

On Tuesday, Aug. 12, River Bend Transit (RBT) received a call from the Make-A-Wish Foundation. They asked if RBT could provide transportation for a tour of the Rock Island Arsenal.

The person who wanted to see the facility was a 14 year-old English boy who uses a wheelchair due to muscular dystrophy. What brought him and his family to the United States was his wish to meet and visit with a wrestler from the World Wrestling Federation (WWF). The WWF was at the Mark of the Quad Cities on Monday, Aug. 11. His wish and the wish of another young man from Pittsburg, Pa., was granted that evening.

After the wrestling event, the family did not have plans for the following day. They asked Make-A-Wish if a tour of the Rock Island Arsenal would be possible. They thought this would be an excellent way to fill the day, since they were scheduled to fly home on Wednesday.

RBT agreed to work on the arrangements, which proved more complicated than showing up at the front gate.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, a visit of a foreign national to a military facility may take several months to arrange. RBT was asking for a clearance within hours.

RBT contacted several individuals and federal offices, which included an Arsenal retiree, the Browning Museum, the Arsenal's Office of Public Affairs, and the Chief of Arsenal Security. Steve Swisher with RBT thinks the U.S. State Department was also involved.

To everyone's delight, within a couple of hours RBT was given permission for the tour. The family was picked up at a motel in Moline, Ill. The van was met at the Arsenal's Moline gate. An employee from the Office of Public Affairs conducted the tour. Everyone involved did his/her utmost to fulfill the wish of a young man from Manchester, England. The happy and grateful family returned home the next day.

Improving people's lives is a privilege for Stephenson

One of the first memories Walter "Walt" Stephenson has of the Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) was attending a conference in Dubuque a couple of months after he became manager at Waterloo MET. One of the speakers asked all the people in the room to raise their hands if they had intended to be in transit when they graduated from college. No hands were raised. He's since met a few people who did intend to go into transit as a profession. Walt says, "It seems most of us were in planning or human services before finding ourselves in transit careers. Me? I was researching groundwater quality."

Walt grew up in Louisiana and Colorado, enlisted for four years (1968-1972) in the Air Force, moved to Iowa, married his wife, Carolyn, graduated from the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), embarked on a career in restaurant management, then another in convenience store management, returned to UNI, and had his first two children before he ever knew what a "ride" or a "service hour" was. In the winter of 1986 Walt was a graduate assistant at UNI when a friend at Iowa Northland Regional Council of Governments (INRCOG) called him with a problem. INRCOG needed a person with business and statistical experience to help MET Transit. It seems MET needed state and federal quarterly reports brought up to date, and an external analysis of its financial position. Walt agreed to do the work, and the next day, he started learning about transit.



Every day, people who have little access to essential transportation use MET to go to work, school, the doctor, grocery store, and all the places they need to go. . . I am blessed in that I'm able to facilitate that, to be in my calling and my profession at the same time."

Walter Stephenson

During spring break of that year Walt and his wife visited universities in the Southeast and returned to Cedar Falls with a good offer of a Ph.D. assistantship from one of the universities he visited. But upon returning, Walt learned that while he was gone, the manager of MET had held a news conference that stated MET was in deep financial trouble and would have to close operations in May, and that he had resigned. Walt had been reviewing MET's financial reports and didn't think that the problem was that dire. He offered to manage the authority for the next few months while he prepared to move south and

give the board time to hire a new general manager. Walt soon found out that the new manager they wanted was himself. "Faced with the choices of more student loans versus a real salary, I accepted their proposal and have managed MET ever since. That's how a physical geographer specializing in groundwater quality research ends up managing a transit system," said Stephenson.

"Transit is an ever-changing, ever-evolving service. At least it has been for the 17+ years that I've managed MET. In that time, I've learned that a transit system must be willing to re-invent itself as demand, technology and the bureaucracy change around it," added Stephenson. MET has gone from a traditional fixed-route service in 1986 to a system roughly twice as large that directly offers both fixed-route and demand-response service, and is beginning a move into campus shuttle service. When asked about the success of MET, Stephenson said, "We have sought out and exploited threads in the broad fabric of transportation where transit is the best alternative. That kind of niche positioning is the hallmark of successful systems. Whether "local" is an urban area or a region, we have to find and be prepared to resolve the local problems that our services can solve best. We have to continually do better what we do best."

Walt's work at MET also has a spiritual basis for him. "I believe that a person is spiritually called to do a number of things in his/her life,

and I know that one of the things that I'm called to do is to improve people's lives by doing what I do at MET. Every day, people who have little access to essential transportation use MET to go to work, school, the doctor, grocery store, and all the places they need to go to carry on everyday life. I am blessed in that I'm able to facilitate that, to be in my calling and my profession at the same time," said Stephenson.

In addition to MET, Walt's a husband and a dad. He also teaches physical geography night courses at Hawkeye Community College. Walt enjoys home and garden projects, and he's a birder, an environmentalist, a political activist, and a scout leader. Walt says, occasionally he finds a little time to sleep.

Walt was one of the first transit managers I (Donna Johnson) ever met at an IPTA meeting. I believe he was IPTA's legislative chair at that time. I was very impressed, and continue to be, with Walt's professionalism, integrity, and ability to truly listen to others while keeping focused on moving forward and trying to do what is best for transit, both in his local community and with the IPTA. Walt is a person new managers should actively seek out and get to know. He has a lot of wisdom and is willing to share what he has learned over the years. He's also a great person to call your friend.

Recent improvements allow for cleaner and better maintained buses

Managers of Iowa's transit systems intensified efforts during 2002 and 2003 to implement 18 projects that entail facilities or purchase of equipment to improve bus cleaning, servicing and maintenance.

J.P. Golinvaux and Samil Sermet of the Office of Public Transit have been instrumental in assisting transit managers in implementing several projects funded with federal transit dollars. "We expect that over half of Iowa's transit fleet will be markedly better serviced and cleaned as a result of capital improvement projects implemented by over half of Iowa transit systems," said Golinvaux.

Four new bus maintenance/storage facilities, two substantial facility expansion or renovation projects, five facility service lane restoration or bus wash-vacuum system replacement projects, and seven projects that entailed paving, restoration or equipment purchases to improve mechanic/facility safety were implemented, with all but one

completed. The land purchase for the joint use maintenance/storage facility project for Region 2/North Iowa Regional Transit System and the city of Mason City Transit System, was completed in 2003, with construction scheduled to begin in 2004.

Other transit systems benefiting from these projects are: Region 1/Northeast Iowa Community Action, based in Decorah; Region 3/RIDES, based in Spencer; Region 4/Siouxland Regional Transit System, based in Sioux City; Region 6/Peoplerides, based in Marshalltown; Region 8/Project Concern, based in Dubuque; Region 12/Western Iowa Transit System, based in Carroll; Region 13/Southwest Iowa Transit Agency, based in Atlantic; Region 15/10-15 Transit, based in Ottumwa; Ames CyRide; Clinton MTA; Coralville Transit; Des Moines MTA; Five Seasons Transportation and Parking (Cedar Rapids); Iowa City Transit; Marshalltown Municipal Transit; Ottumwa Transit Authority; and Sioux City Transit.

Electronic forms to save time and money

The Office of Public Transit's (OPT) Property Inventory form was selected as the pilot project for DOT's purchase of e-Form software. The e-Forms selection team (including 11 division representatives) was tasked to decide and submit to the vendor, FileNet, one form that shows full functionality of an electronic form (examples: print, routing, tracking, calculations, validations, fills from a database, fills to a database, and inclusion of attachments, etc.) The team chose the Property Inventory form used by the OPT due to it being the form that met most of the functionality requirements the DOT wanted the vendor to demonstrate.

Staff from OPT has worked closely with the Modal Division Support Team to set up an Oracle database, and with Forms Management and the vendor to complete the form. It is anticipated the form will be deployed in late spring. The completion of this project will allow transit systems to submit inventory information through a Web-based environment to our databases, rather than sending in paper copies of the form and staff entering the data.

Also, this past year, the OPT staff and Modal Division Support Team have been working very closely to develop several databases. The property inventory database, which will be used in conjunction with the e-Forms project, is about 90 percent complete. A statistical report database used quarterly by the transit systems is currently in the test phase. This database functions as the collector of information that is used to distribute state and federal funding. Two other databases that will be developed in the coming year are the transit element of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and a grants management database.

Use of the electronic forms is anticipated to save time and money, along with decreasing errors associated with multiple layers of data entry. OPT plans to continue to explore the use of electronic forms for reporting purposes in 2004.



New home of Marshalltown Public Works Facility, jointly used by Marshalltown Municipal Transit and Region 6 Planning Commission (dba Peoplerides).

Improvement projects, from page 1

services. OPT's staff has also assisted Cedar Rapids to complete, and Dubuque to apply for assistance to implement projects to improve service to intercity bus patrons. Cedar Rapids' project improved access to restroom facilities by persons with disabilities and complimented other projects at its ground transportation center to improve connectivity with its skywalks for pedestrians. Intercity Bus Assistance funding has now also been approved to assist Dubuque Keyline to retrofit their maintenance facility to support its new role serving as the commission agent for intercity carriers, and to provide passengers with improved ticketing and waiting areas.

These facility projects build upon less visible, but none the less critical, projects OPT is administering to assist Jefferson Lines improve its ticketing process (integrating with that of Greyhound), and by funding a statewide toll-free number for route, schedule and fare information for intercity bus services.



Cedar Rapids GTC is now more accessible to persons with disabilities.

Transit training library feature video training

“Reasonable Suspicion Referral for Drug and Alcohol Testing for Supervisors”

“Reasonable Suspicion Referral for Drug and Alcohol Testing for Supervisors” is a U. S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration Office of Safety and Security course that is designed to inform transit supervisors on the dos and don'ts, whys and hows in making fair and reasonable-suspicion drug and alcohol testing referrals of covered employees performing safety-sensitive job functions.

The training package includes a four-segment video and a leader's guide. To create an interactive learning environment, the video pauses after each segment to allow for group discussions and/or the completion of workbook exercises.

The video portion of this training package consists of the following four segments:

- General Requirements on Reasonable Suspicion Referrals
- Alcohol Abuse in the Workplace
- Prohibited Drugs in the Workplace
- Make the Call – The Reasonable Suspicion Interview

The objectives of this training package are:

- Define reasonable suspicion
- Learn the standards for making a reasonable suspicion determination
- Provide guidance regarding an employee interview

The Office of Public Transit has a large selection of training resources available to loan at no charge to public transit systems and other passenger transportation providers. To borrow this video, or obtain a complete listing of available training materials, call Melissa Davis-Oviatt, Office of Public Transit, 515-239-1875, or e-mail your request to melissa.davis@dot.state.ia.us.

2004

January

Jan. 29, Workplace Safety and Security, Ames, Iowa (for more information, contact Donna Johnson at 515-233-7875)

February

Feb. 10, Iowa Transportation Commission Meeting, Ames, Iowa

Feb. 18, Iowa Public Transportation Association Legislative Meeting, (for more information, contact Bev Thomas at 515-440-6057)

Feb. 22-25, Marketing & Communications Workshop, Westin Horton Plaza, San Diego, Calif.

Program Information: Contact Jack Gonzalez, or phone 202-496-4803

Registration Information: Contact Clarissa Ryan, or 202-496-4845

March

March 7-10, APTA Legislative Conference, JW Marriott Hotel, Washington, D.C.

Program Information: Contact Rich Weaver, or phone 202-496-4809

Registration Information: Contact Heather Rachels, or phone 202-496-4838

March 9, Iowa Transportation Commission Meeting, Ames, Iowa

April

April 1-2, ITS Emergency Response Workshop – Best American and Overseas Practices, Hyatt Regency Hotel, Milwaukee, Wis.

Program Information: Contact Lou Sanders, 202-496-4886, or

George Wynne, 202-496-4833

Registration Information: Contact Clarissa Ryan, 202-496-4845

April 12-13, Iowa Transportation Commission Tour & Meeting, location TBD

April 20, FTA Substance Abuse Training, Sioux Falls, So. Dak. (for more information, <http://transit-safety.volpe.dot.gov/Training/655Seminars/>)

April 28-29, Transit Operator Fatigue Seminar, Des Moines, Iowa (for more information, contact Donna Johnson at 515-233-7875)

May

May 2-5, APTA's Bus and Paratransit Conference/ Bus Rapid Transit Conference, Denver, Colo.

Program Information: Contact Gloria A. Smith, or phone 202-496-4818

Registration Information: Contact Cara Reeve, or phone 202-496-4874

May 11, Iowa Transportation Commission Meeting, Ames, Iowa

June

June 2-4, Iowa Public Transportation Association Annual Meeting, Holiday Inn, Cedar Falls, Iowa (for more information, contact Bev Thomas at 515-440-6057)

June 5, IPTA/Iowa DOT Annual Rodeo, Cedar Falls, Iowa (for more information, contact Mark Little, Assistant General Manager, Waterloo MET, 319-234-5714, ext. 102)

For more detailed conference listings see the following Web sites:

<http://www.apta.com/meetings>

<http://www.ctaa.org/calendar>

<http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/into/calendar/cal.html>



CONNECTIONS is a publication of the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit. It is distributed free of charge to public transit systems, agencies providing human service transportation, intercity bus carriers, and other interested individuals and organizations. It is also available on the DOT's Web site.

Please direct comments, stories or story ideas to:
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515-233-7875

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515-239-1875

Visit our Web site at
iatransit.com

Our Mission Statement
"To advocate and deliver services that support and promote a safe and comprehensive transit system in Iowa to enhance Iowans access to opportunities and quality of life."

The staff wishes to thank those who have provided information and reference materials for this newsletter.

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