



CONNECTIONS

Office of Public Transit Newsletter • September 2005

Congress reauthorizes transit programs

On July 28, almost two years after the previous act expired, Congress passed the new surface transportation legislation authorizing the federal transit and highway programs through Sept. 30, 2009. The bill was signed into law Aug. 11, and is called the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users” or “SAFETEA-LU.”

SAFETEA-LU substantially increases federal transit funding at the national level. It also continues the precedent established in the previous Act of providing a “guarantee” that the annual appropriations over the next four years will include all of the funding authorized in the bill. The new Act allocates the programmed amounts through new formulas and earmarks much of the remaining “discretionary” funding, which has essentially eliminated the flexibility previously afforded members of Congress during the appropriations process.

While Iowa is guaranteed more funding under the new Act than under the previous one, it is very possible that Iowa could end up receiving less money than in the past. This is because the previous Act guaranteed program totals, but left the decisions on how to distribute those funds to Congress during their annual appropriations process. With help from Iowa’s Congressional delegation, the process worked favorably for Iowa’s transit systems. This is a big concern for Iowa as the amount of funds earmarked for statewide replacement of over-age vehicles is only about half of what was appropriated in FY2005; which itself, was not sufficient to keep up with replacement needs.

Despite growth of the transit program nationally, under SAFETEA-LU the total federal transit funding authorized for Iowa falls about \$2 million short of the FY2005 appropriated levels. The FY2007 guarantees will also remain lower than the FY2005 appropriations. It’s not until FY2008 and FY2009 that the ongoing program growth is expected to bring Iowa’s authorized funding level above the FY2005 level.

DOT staff is anticipating that some level of funding will be available for earmarking through the annual appropriations

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process. Thus, we remain optimistic that Iowa’s Congressional delegation will be able to assist in preventing Iowa’s total annual transit funding from decreasing, and possibly allow Iowa to share in some part in the national program increases.

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Director's Column

By Michelle McEnany

This summer has been a busy one for the Office of Public Transit (OPT). Here's a snapshot of just a few of the activities that have taken place. Federal auditors performed two reviews of the transit programs the Iowa Department of Transportation administers. Staff with the OPT and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) toured western Iowa visiting with rural transit systems. Reauthorization of the federal surface transportation programs was finally passed. Negotiations were finalized that allowed a contract to be awarded for the Facility Needs Analysis Study. And, the process has begun to get an Urban Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Integration study underway.

Federal reviews

The reviews of the state-administered federal grant programs required extensive upfront work by OPT staff, which resulted in volumes of paperwork being provided to the review teams in order for them to perform desk reviews prior to their on-site visit. Once in Iowa, the team conducted a week long on-site review, going into the programs in detail by examining all the paperwork, processes and procedures, and interviewing staff members.

During the first week of June, three teams of federal auditors came to Iowa to evaluate how well Iowa's small urban and regional transit systems are complying with federal regulations requiring drug and alcohol testing of transit drivers and other safety-sensitive personnel. At the end of the month and into July, a federal review team came to Iowa to do a comprehensive review of how the OPT administers FTA's rural transit assistance and special needs programs, as well as the statewide capital grants received.

The state management review examined the OPT's policies and procedures to determine whether they were in compliance with the federal program guidance. Programming and payment processes were also examined.

A significant focus area for the review team pertained to contract administration and the OPT's oversight of the subrecipient transit systems, with an emphasis on insuring compliance with federal requirements on purchasing practices, civil rights, etc. As a part of their review, the team visited one 5311 subrecipient and one 5310 subrecipient to affirm the OPT's statements with regard to how the programs operate.

The findings in the final reports with respect to Iowa's rural transit programs were

favorable. However, there were a number of issues at some locations that need to be addressed. The OPT staff are currently following up with the affected transit agencies to verify that required corrective actions are taken.

As a result of the state management review, Iowa's transit systems are likely to see some slight changes in the Office of Public Transit's administration of the federal transit assistance programs. One area will be an increased emphasis on enforcement of contract deadlines so that grants can be closed out in a timely manner. A second will be a resumption of the OPT's review of subrecipients' third-party contracts to verify inclusion of federally-required clauses. The third area involves several administrative changes relating to transit facilities that have been funded through federal grants administered by the OPT.

FTA regional staff tour western Iowa

During the second week of August, the Office of Public Transit arranged for a tour of eight rural transit systems in western Iowa for Mokhtee Ahmad, Administrator of the FTA regional office in Kansas City, and Cathy Monroe, the FTA regional staffer who works with our rural grants programs.

Mokhtee, who previously administered the statewide transit programs for Kansas DOT, has emphasized the importance of federal staff

getting a "feel" for local transit operations. He conducted a similar tour in eastern Iowa two years ago.

Transit systems visited this year included: Southern Iowa Trolley, Creston; Southwest Iowa Transit Agency, Atlantic; Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll; MIDAS Council of Governments and Dodger Area Rapid Transit, both based in Fort Dodge; Regional Transit Authority (RIDES), Spencer; and North Iowa Area Council of Governments and Mason City Transit, both of Mason City.

Reauthorization

As you can imagine, there has been a lot of talk about the impact of the reauthorization of the surface transportation programs. Peter Hallock has spent a considerable amount of time analyzing the legislation and crunching the numbers. There is an article on the reauthorization bill included in this newsletter. Peter is also happy to speak to groups that want to learn about the bill's impact on public transit.

Facility Needs Analysis Study

The Facility Needs Analysis Study is presently under contract and work officially underway. This study will inventory the state's transit facilities, quantify the existing needs and create standards for transit facilities. It will be an important planning tool in maintaining and enhancing/

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Iowa DOT director resigns

Governor Tom Vilsack accepted Mark Wandro's resignation as director of the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT) effective Friday, Sept. 30.

"It has been an honor and a pleasure working for the Vilsack/Pederson Administration and citizens of Iowa," said Director Mark Wandro. "Over the last six years, I have gained the utmost respect for the work ethic, dedication, innovating thinking, and flexibility of DOT employees," added Wandro.

Wandro has accepted the executive vice-president position with Snyder & Associates, Inc. of Ankeny.

Governor Vilsack has appointed Nancy Richardson as director of the Iowa DOT. Nancy has been with the DOT since 1982, serving most recently as director of the Operations and Finance Division.

Nancy has a thorough understanding of the DOT and its operations, and will be a source of stable leadership during the remainder of the Vilsack/Pederson Administration. Many of our readers may remember when Nancy was director of the Air and Transit Division and started her career with DOT serving as a District Representative in the Public Transit Division. As such, she has a strong transit background and a great awareness of transit issues. We look forward to working with Nancy in her new role and congratulate her on her appointment as director of the Iowa DOT.

CTAA provides opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with Secretary Mineta

Mark Ackerman, executive director of Disabled Transportation and Accessibility dba Jasper County Transit (JCT), attended the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) convention in St. Louis this past May. His trip was sponsored by the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Authority, as a subcontractor to that agency for public transit services in the Jasper County area.

The purpose of the trip was to participate in as many educational opportunities and training programs as time permitted. Ackerman's main goal was to participate in the Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity (PASS) program and three other train-the-trainer sessions to secure certifications needed to formalize JCT's driver instruction program.

By applying techniques covered in the PASS training, Ackerman predicts that JCT, and perhaps other HIRTA providers, will be able to substantially reduce risks of passenger and driver injury. Extensive training was given to assist drivers in helping passengers with special needs. The course also provided intensive emergency situation training.

Ackerman remarked, "We also spent time on driver sensitivity to passengers, understanding mobility equipment, lift operations, and securement and restraint systems, as well as, passenger evacuation techniques. This training was very beneficial and the instruction was



HIRTA contractor, Mark Ackerman (right), meets U.S. Secretary of Transportation Mineta at CTAA

professional. I've already implemented techniques learned into training for our staff."

Ackerman says the conference training content will enhance his benefits planning and outreach programs for people with disabilities. In particular, Mark expects that his participation in CTAA's conference sessions has refined his expertise and strategy for securing legislation to assure that Medicaid will fund work trips for persons with disabilities. The CTAA Expo allowed Ackerman to exchange ideas and network with others across the country who are advocates for eliminating barriers and improving access for elderly and persons with disabilities.

During the CTAA convention awards banquet, U.S. Secretary of Transportation Norman Mineta was presented the Aaron Henry Human Rights Award. Secretary Mineta said that Aaron Henry was "a towering figure in the modern civil rights movement." During his acceptance speech,

he talked about transportation being the missing link that keeps people from participating in the most basic of life activities, and President Bush's deep commitment to tearing down barriers and providing every American the opportunity to live a full and independent life. Following the banquet, Ackerman had the opportunity to meet and have a private conversation with Secretary Mineta. Ackerman appreciated the opportunity to talk about key transit issues he has been working on in Iowa.

Ackerman was encouraged by the intense interest that Secretary Mineta expressed in issues that have been important in Iowa. In particular, Mark took the opportunity to stress the importance of transportation waivers under Human Service entitlement programs. Secretary Mineta encouraged Mark and other Iowa transit managers to refine their legislative strategies, share issues with him and FTA officials, and plan to attend CTAA's conference next year in Orlando, FL.

Coordination is key to improving transit service to lowans

Iowa is serious about transportation coordination and we want people to know about it! The Iowa State-level Transportation Coordination Council will be sponsoring seven regional workshops on transportation coordination in 2006, with the first starting in February and the last conference ending in May. Later in the year, probably July or August, there will be a state conference on transportation coordination that will find the

common strands of concern from the regional workshops. The result will be a series of regional plans and one statewide plan for improving transportation coordination in Iowa.

A lot has changed since early days of coordination when Iowa was the first state in the nation to pass a coordination law. By 1980, Iowa was THE national model for coordination (no one had ever really thought of a regional approach before). FTA did

write-ups on the program, and the "Iowa Plan" for coordination was adopted by more than 27 states in just a few years.

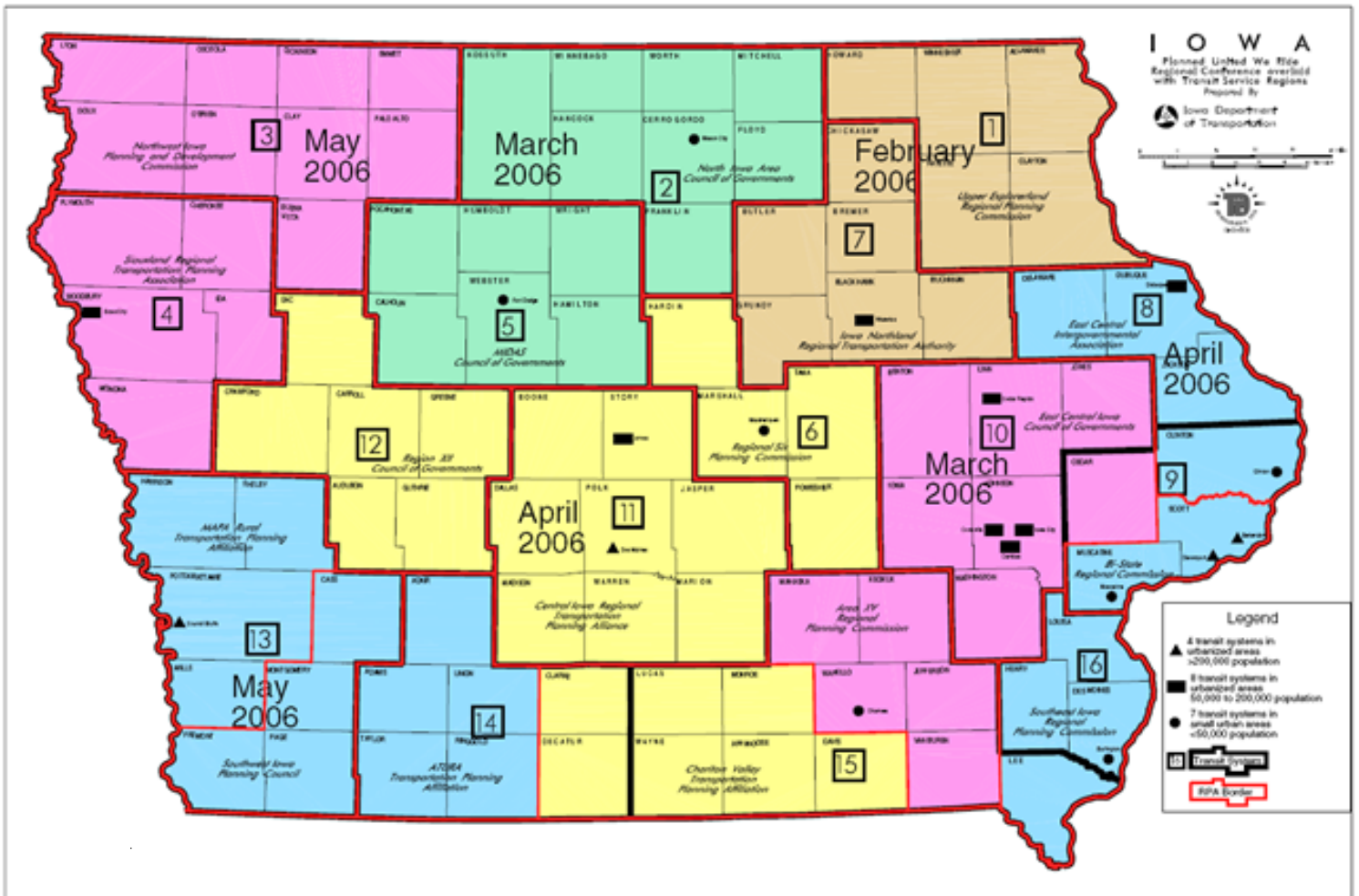
The Iowa Transportation Coordination Council (ITCC) wants to raise coordination in Iowa to a new level.

Human service agency customer and worker surveys have for years pointed to transportation (and by inference transportation coordination) as a top priority in client service delivery. Transportation coordination is seen as a

means of expanding services to meet client needs while using the very limited human service dollars available. Human services cannot deliver the services unless they can get their clients where they need to be. Right now, especially in rural areas, that is often a difficult task.

Transit agency managers and the Iowa DOT have promoted coordination for years as a simple effective technique to improve service at little or no cost. Now they have some new tools at the federal

Coordination, see next page



This map shows the territories covered by the Regional workshops, which will be held in 2006. The colored areas indicate the territory to be covered by a particular workshop. Heavy black lines indicate boundaries between transit regions. Thin red lines indicate boundaries between regional planning affiliations. Heavy red and black lines indicate where transit region boundaries and regional planning affiliation boundaries are contiguous.

Coordination,

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level. First, a new federal coordination initiative called "United We Ride," has wired all agencies of the federal government into transportation coordination whereas before, these agencies had been only passive players. Second, Congress passed SAFETEA-LU – the transportation reauthorization bill, which requires local transportation planners to consider human services transportation alongside public transit in their planning activities.

The initial draft regional workshop agenda created by Iowa DOT staff for Iowa Transportation Coordination Council review, projects a full day workshop, with the morning dedicated to education and the afternoon to action. Input by regional planning affiliations, metropolitan planning organizations, and transit agency managers will insure that the agenda, and what is to be discussed, will be relevant to the task at hand.

The education component will outline the structure, goals and purposes of the workshops. There will be a review of transportation coordination history in our state, including available resources, and the benefits and disadvantages of coordination. There will also be a discussion on coordination procedures and techniques, funding, and establishing goals for transportation service and coordination.

ADA celebrates 15th anniversary

July 26 marked the 15th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

On the anniversary of this landmark legislation, we recognize the important progress the ADA has brought about for individuals with disabilities who are better able to develop meaningful skills, engage in productive work, and participate fully in our society through the removal of physical barriers and false perceptions.

According to Easter Seals, 54 million children and adults live with disabilities in America. Federal, state and local governments, the transit industry and organizations representing persons with disabilities continue to work together to ensure that our transportation systems are accessible to everyone.

The ADA has brought about many changes to our physical surroundings. Curb cuts in sidewalks allow greater access for persons using wheelchairs, and buildings are more accessible by including ramps and elevators. Other changes include Braille on hotel room doors and public bathrooms, larger bathroom stalls and lower drinking fountains. Service animals are now permitted in places denied access before passage of the ADA. Reasonable accommodations in the workplace have allowed many people with disabilities to hold jobs, pay taxes and contribute to the economy. For many of us these changes are barely noticeable, but to a person with a disability it means freedom, mobility and opportunity.

"Public transit plays a key part in the effort to provide persons with disabilities access to society. Making transit systems more accessible helps to remove exclusionary barriers and allows a greater number of people to be active in their communities," said Peter Hallock, Office of Public Transit's (OPT) assistant director and ADA specialist.

According to the OPT, over 78 percent of the nearly 1,600 public transit vehicles in Iowa meet ADA requirements. Iowa's 35 public transit systems provided nearly 24 million rides last year.

Typically, transit systems in Iowa's larger cities (over 20,000 in population) offer both accessible fixed-route buses equipped with wheelchair lifts or ramps and complementary paratransit services.

Most of Iowa's regional transit systems offer demand-response service. To use this type of service, riders must call at least a day in advance and request to be picked up and taken to a specific destination, based on the schedule of services for that day.

All transit systems in Iowa are open to the public and are required by law to dispatch an accessible vehicle to anyone requesting such accommodations, in accordance with their published schedules.

Neutral facilitators and session recorders will staff the afternoon action sessions. Groups will form to brainstorm regionally-based problems and solutions that will enhance transportation services through coordination activity. At the end of the day, participants will report their findings to the main group, and regional findings will be voted upon.

After the workshop concludes, the recorder notes will be transcribed into a report that will be sent back to the coordination council and to regional planning affiliations, metropolitan planning organizations and transit agencies for review and action.

Of course, none of this will be successful without a desire from participants to make it successful.

If all goes according to plan, the Iowa human services and transportation community will be able to improve transportation services to Iowans in the most cost-effective way known: by increasing the efficient use of the assets that we have available to us.



Donna Johnson is Talking Transit

On Aug. 4 I had an opportunity to speak at the Iowa Association of Area Agencies on Aging's (i4a) statewide educational conference entitled "Behind the Wheel: Mobility and the Older Driver." There were nine other presenters who spoke on the issue of older Iowans and transportation, covering such topics as older driver safety, options for older drivers and highway design.

This event afforded me the opportunity to address the audience on the topics of independent living, planning for change and exploring public transit. One of the primary focuses of my presentation was making folks aware of the services Iowa's 35 public

transit systems provide. Special attention was given to the half-off fares available to older Iowans riding on fixed-route buses in larger cities, and complementary paratransit service resulting from the American's with Disabilities Act. Rural demand-response services were also covered; in particular, how to request rides. In addition, photographs of the different types of vehicles used in rural areas, in contrast to a typical fixed-route service bus, were shown.

In addition to my presentation, the Office of Public Transit distributed the "Public Transit Services in Iowa" brochure, newsletters, large print brochures, and promotional items displaying the iatransit.com Web site from our exhibit booth.

This was a great opportunity to meet with others at the local, state, regional, and

national levels to discuss transportation options for the elderly. Many attendees stopped by our exhibit booth to pick up materials and ask questions.

Another upcoming event is the "Seniors in Motion" day, which is set for Oct. 6, 2005, and sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association. Transit systems around the country will be making efforts to help build awareness of public transportation's critical contribution to addressing the mobility needs of older Americans. Watch for ways to get involved in your local community to help support public transit.

If you are aware of events where the Office of Public Transit can make presentations to decision makers or other members of your community who would benefit from statewide information about what public transit has to offer, please let me know. We are working hard to emphasize coordination of services and bring a greater awareness to the public of available services.

Transit Tidbits

According to the Federal Transit Administration's Safety and Security Web site, "Every work day, transit moves more than 14 million passengers. In two weeks, transit moves more passengers than AMTRAK moves in a year. In one month, transit moves more passengers than U.S. airlines move in a year. More than 9.5 billion rides a year are provided by our transit systems."

Did you know that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) offers a toll-free American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) assistance line? The number is 888-446-4511. If you have any questions or concerns regarding **public transportation** for persons with disabilities, you can contact FTA's Office of Civil Rights on its toll-free line. Your questions and concerns will be addressed by the FTA ADA Officer of the Day. If you require specific technical assistance, your call will be directed to the appropriate FTA program office.

July 21 was the 40th anniversary of Iowa's Civil Rights Act. Several people marched from the Iowa Capitol Building to the Historical Building to re-enact the civil rights marches of the 1960s. This was a unique opportunity to learn about the wealth of diversity that exists in Iowa.

DOT announces annual transit system awards

Two transit systems have been honored by the Iowa Department of Transportation at the Iowa Public Transit Association's annual conference held in Cedar Rapids June 9.

The transit system in the city of Council Bluffs was recognized as the most improved urban transit system of the year. Region 9's River Bend Transit (RBT), based in Davenport, was acknowledged as being the most improved regional transit system.

"These awards are considered the most prestigious bestowed by the DOT's Office of Public Transit (OPT) upon transit agencies because they acknowledge the systems' efforts to increase ridership and decrease costs-per-ride," said Michelle McEnany, OPT Director. This is the fourth time RBT has received this award, but the first time for Council Bluffs to be honored. Awards have been made on an annual basis since the mid-1980s.

Claudia Rodenburg, transit manager for the city of Council Bluffs, credits its 8.22 percent gain in ridership and 2.62 percent decrease in cost-per-ride primarily to increased participation from employers in downtown Omaha with riders' subsidy programs and lower fuel costs.

Council Bluffs contracts with Metro Area Transit (MAT) of Omaha, Neb., for its fixed-route system; and American Ambulance Service, also based in Omaha, Neb., for its



Randy Zobrist, RBT Director, accepts a regional award from OPT Director Michelle McEnany. (Claudia Rodenburg was not present to accept the urban award.)

paratransit service, which is operated under the name of Council Bluffs Special Transit Services (STS).

During fiscal year 2004, River Bend Transit's management implemented several service expansions, some of which were under the Federal Transit Administration's Job Access/Reverse Commute program. RBT's success with these projects, and increased focus on improving subscription route productivity, resulted in an 8.75 percent increase in ridership. Randy Zobrist, RBT's executive director, accepted the award on behalf of the transit system.

RBT serves the rural portions of Cedar, Clinton, Muscatine, and Scott counties in eastern Iowa, as well as, providing paratransit service for the Iowa portion of the Quad Cities metropolitan area.

For more information about Iowa's 16 regional and 19 urban transit systems, visit iatransit.com.

DBE goal set for FFY 2006



FTA Regional Counsel Paula Schwach speaks at IPTA/IDOT annual training conference last June about DBE program requirements.

An annual Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal has been developed for participation in the Iowa Department of Transportation's and its subrecipients' (including transit systems and planning agencies) federal fiscal year (FFY) 2006 federally-assisted contracts.

The DOT has established 0.2 percent as its annual DBE goal, with an expectation that approximately 0.1 percent will be achieved through race/gender neutral and 0.1 percent through race-conscious means. This goal applies to professional services, construction and other procurements beginning Oct. 1, 2005, and ending Sept. 30, 2006, and is anticipated to total approximately \$14.9 million.

This goal was developed in compliance with federal regulations set forth at 49 CFR Part 26, "Participation by Disadvantaged Business Enterprises in U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Programs." The goal identifies the relative availability of DBE's based on evidence of ready, willing and able DBE's in relationship to all comparable businesses known to be available to compete for Iowa DOT's U.S. DOT-assisted contracts. The overall annual goal reflects staff's determination of the level of DBE participation that would be expected absent the effects of discrimination.

Advertising of the transit program's DBE participation goal for U.S. DOT-funded projects started Aug. 17 in the *Des Moines Register*. Notices were also placed in three minority newspapers, the *Bystander*, *El Comunicador* and *Mississippi Corridor* edition of the *Bystander*. Additionally, this same information has been posted on the Web site iatransit.com.

Free ride initiative implemented in Clinton is big success

Clinton's City Council made a bold public transit policy decision in March 2005. Students from kindergarten through 12th grade are now permitted to ride the city's transit system under a free-fare policy. Student and parent response has been enthusiastic, and ridership has increased dramatically on the Municipal Transit Administration's (MTA) route services.

After years of steadily declining use by Clinton's school-age residents, Councilman Robert Soesbe asked Transportation Director Dennis Hart to come up with a plan to reverse this trend and provide an estimated cost to implement it. Hart did just that and the city council approved the proposed resolution that makes it possible for students — who are enrolled in public, parochial or home school curriculums, whether a resident of or visiting Clinton — to ride the city's fixed-route buses for free.

Some of the reasons the transportation director had given the city council members for adopting the resolution included the following.

- Students that do not learn to use public transit as children may never use transit as adults.
- Parents might better appreciate the option of having their school-age children use public transit to access educational, recreational, cultural, and part-time work opportunities across the city, if bus use did not entail any outlay to purchase a pass or ticket.
- Participation in the community's programs and social events could increase significantly, especially by students from low-income households, if student riders were educated about how they might use transit services and their parents would not have to incur any out-of-pocket expense for their ride.
- Learning to navigate Clinton using the schedules, route maps and city bus services could be a beneficial experience for young residents.
- Viewing transit use as a means for students to gain a greater awareness of community resources outside their school or home, such as local libraries, parks and voluntary organizations, makes Clinton's decision to offer students free transit service an even better investment.

- Increased student ridership could lead to improvements in system operating statistics and eventually increase Clinton's share of formula state and federal transit assistance, which is allocated in a manner that rewards systems, in part, for improved efficiency and ridership.

Since this policy went into effect on April 1, 2005, monthly student ridership has increased 350 percent. When the city charged students a fare to ride MTA, average ridership hovered slightly over 2,100 rides per month, and generated roughly \$12,000 in passenger revenue per year. Director Hart was elated to inform the city council that student ridership had increased to 5,516 in April, and in May the student ridership reached the 7,363 mark, with every expectation that the trend would continue next school year. In June the MTA provided 5,529 student rides compared to just 591 in June 2004.

Realistically there will be some point in the next several months where student ridership will level off. But it is wonderful that the city can do so much for students and their families, at so little added cost. Provided that students continue to take advantage of this remarkable civic investment the city of Clinton is making accessible to them, it is conceivable that overall annual ridership will be improved by as much as 25 percent. Student ridership itself could rise from 9 percent to 23 percent of Clinton's annual patronage.

"I estimated for the city council that it was possible to increase student transportation by roughly 50,000 rides annually. Council action has made it possible to provide those extra rides at a marginal added cost to Clinton taxpayers of \$12,000 a year," said Hart.

"Of particular note is MTA's modest increase in cost-per-ride of only \$.30 per additional student rider. No measure MTA has taken in the past decade has accomplished more benefits to transit patrons or the community than our student's-ride-free initiative," added Hart.

IPTA elects new officers for 2005-2006 board

The Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) membership voted to elect new officers for its 2005-2006 board: Jim Burns, Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll, replacing Pam Ward whose term was up as president of the association; Rose Lee, Regional Transit Authority/RIDES, Spencer, moved from rural vice-president to secretary, replacing Pat Otto; Brian Schoon, Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission, Waterloo, accepted the position of rural vice-president; and Mark Munson, Keyline, Dubuque, was re-elected to another two-year term as legislative chair.

Other active board members: Steve Spade, Des Moines MTA, urban vice-president; Brian McClatchey, University of Iowa CAMBUS, treasurer; and Ron Logsden, Iowa City Transit, member-at-large.

The IPTA supports 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.

One of the ways IPTA accomplishes this is by holding training at its annual and mid-year conferences. This year the annual meeting was held in Cedar Rapids and training was focused on technology. An expo is also held in conjunc-

tion with the conferences to enable vendors to showcase their latest products, and answer any questions transit managers and their staff might have. Ron Logsden, IPTA's board member responsible for coordinating training, said, "The training enabled transit systems around the state to see first-hand what technologies are available and how they can be used to enhance operations and customer amenities."

IPTA membership is open to designated public transit systems in Iowa. Associate membership is open to



Newly elected IPTA board (left to right) Brian McClatchey, Rose Lee, Steve Spade, Jim Burns, Brian Schoon, and Ron Logsden. (Not pictured: Mark Munson)

agencies providing service under contract to the transit systems, inter-city bus carriers, taxi operators, vendors, and others.

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

Collaboration of efforts benefits seniors

Did you know that over 20 percent of Iowa's population is age 65 or older?

In 2004, a Scott County study identified access to transportation as one of the three top issues facing the community's seniors. Reports indicate that the demographic makeup of the U.S. population is expected to change dramatically between now and 2025; the number of older Americans is expected to increase by as much as 50%. As such, there is no time like the present to start looking for ways to provide greater involvement for aging Iowan's to participate in society and the economy.

Representatives from Bettendorf Transit, Davenport CitiBus, and River Bend Transit went on a mission to visit senior housing complexes in the Quad-City area in an effort

to educate folks about their public transit services and recruit volunteers to serve as "Transit Ambassadors". The Transit Ambassador program is an outgrowth of the Scott County study. These "Ambassadors" would then train other senior citizens by helping to educate them about the basics of riding public transit.

Folks were quick to volunteer as 203 people attended the introductory meetings and 25 volunteered to attend in-depth Ambassador training last August. The Ambassadors are taught how to read the bus schedules, navigate the different transit system's routes and then share that knowledge with their neighbors. This really helps alleviate some of the fears seniors have when they are about to ride public transit for the first time or if they are

unsure of routes and connections to a new destination. With a little help from their friends, more seniors are now riding public transit as a result of the Transit Ambassadors program.

The goal of the program is to strengthen the connection and awareness of county services with the senior population in the county. Steve Swisher, River Bend Transit's business development director, said, "the program is working well and paying dividends. More seniors are better able to get around and get involved in their communities." The group's efforts have been directed toward independent and assisted senior housing and additional meetings are being planned at this time.

Collaboration, see page 14

RTA introduces new vehicle graphics



RTA unveils new vehicle signage

The RTA, headquartered in Dubuque and serving Jackson, Delaware and Dubuque counties, has recently undertaken a major change in the visual appearance of its vehicles and signage in an effort to bring greater awareness to the public transit services the RTA provides.

Jim Sigwarth, RTA's operations manager, says the impetus for signage change had three elements. First, the staff had begun looking at updating their uniforms 18 months ago, and began discussions about improving their logo and image consistency. Then, the Community Transportation Association of America Expo in Seattle provided an inspiration for vehicle graphics that were fun and more inviting. Lastly, the prospect of procuring 10 new buses within a year provided a good opportunity to, according to Jim, "liven-up the dated and medical-transportation appearance" of the current graphics.

Jim indicated that they wanted to keep the navy color, but sought a contrasting color. According to Jim, they chose the green color because "green seemed to resonate as it reflected the colorful rolling fields of the three-county region that RTA serves."

Staff also wanted to update the existing RTA typeface into a discernable logo. The logo is very clear that the service the RTA provides is open to the public and also provides a toll-free number for folks to call to obtain information about the service or schedule a ride.

Once the changes to color, typeface and logo were finalized, Jim wanted something fun and a bit more whimsical. He suggested "simple line drawings of riders that are representative of a variety of ages, without any real strong or exclusive stereotypes." Jim and the RTA staff are very pleased with the end results.

Reauthorization, from page 1

SAFETEA-LU's financial impacts on Iowa vary across the programs.

- While rural funding will be going up significantly, urban funding for FY2006 will be virtually the same as FY2005, except for the significant boost that Iowa City and Ames will get from the new "Small Transit Intensive Cities" program. This program will provide extra funding to small cities that provide relatively high levels of transit service.
- Iowa's total JARC funding for FY2006 will be about half what it was in FY2005. And instead of being a single allocation that could be used to support services anywhere in the state, it will now be split into separate amounts for each urbanized area over 200,000 in population, and separate lump-sum amounts for urbanized areas under 200,000 and for rural areas.
- A new program established to support services for persons with disabilities beyond the minimums required in ADA, known as "New Freedom," is expected to bring \$600,000-\$700,000 to the state, again split out between various areas as under the JARC program. These funds are allocated by formula based on the census count of persons with disabilities within each jurisdiction.
- The discretionary capital funding that Iowa systems

rely on for statewide vehicle replacements could be 50 percent less than in the past, depending on what happens during the appropriations process.

- In the later years of the Act, the guaranteed numbers grow slightly, but the relative numbers for each program remain similar to the previous Act.

Two new demonstration programs that Iowa transit systems may possibly be eligible to participate in are: senior transportation and non-emergency medical transportation for persons needing kidney dialysis. While these types of services are already eligible under the regular federal transit programs, SAFETEA-LU dedicates new funding to these specific purposes.

The overall financial impact of SAFETEA-LU on Iowa is yet to be determined. Despite increased transit funding at the national level, funding authorized for Iowa in FY2006 is about 9.5 percent less than what Congress had appropriated for FY2005 under the previous Act. It remains important that Iowans continue working with the Congressional delegation to seek this continued support for public transit in Iowa.

For additional information on the impact of the reauthorization, look under "Hot News" on the home page of our Web site, iatransit.com.

Who's Who in Iowa Transit

Curt Miller looks forward to learning more about transit.

It's been almost a year now and people are noticing the changes implemented by Curt Miller, transit director for the city of Sioux City Transit (SCT) system. Curt's career with the city spans 26 years, and he has been able to advance transit in the Sioux City area because of his vast experience. Starting out as an assistant purchasing agent, Curt worked his way up to fleet manager in the city's centralized fleet division managing maintenance and replacement of the city's fleet of vehicles and equipment.



In October 2004, the city formed a new department called the Purchasing/Fleet/Transit Department, and Curt became the director of this new department. Many changes have since occurred to streamline transit operations and implement efficiencies.

The transit system has undergone some building improvements at the administration and maintenance buildings. Currently, the maintenance shop is implementing computerized maintenance and barcode inventory systems that are also used in the city fleet operations. Curt says, "When completed all of the fuel, maintenance and capital replacement costs will be tracked in one software system. Using this software the city's fleet system has developed into a regional fleet center serving cities, counties, schools, and state and federal agencies from the surrounding three-state areas. The city's fleet operation has been recognized by the International City/County Management Association and Iowa League of Cities for cost effectiveness, and innovation in cooperating with outside governmental agencies to reduce overall fleet operation and maintenance costs. Combining the transit maintenance operations with the fleet operations should continue to provide more efficiency for both divisions."

Curt has been active in professional associations including purchasing, public works and fleet management. He is past president of the Siouxland Purchasing Association and has served as the national user's group coordinator for the software used in the city for both purchasing and fleet. He is a Certified Purchasing Manager with the National Association of Purchasing Management.

Curt says he enjoys the challenges of managing in the public sector and is looking forward to learning more about transit systems across the state. He says, "Serving the public and working with dedicated, hard-working employees make this job rewarding and enjoyable." In his spare time he enjoys, golfing, boating, and traveling with his wife and two boys.

Meet SRTS Transit Director Sandra "Sandy" Langel

Sandy joined the ranks of regional transit system management in December 2004. She brought with her many years of experience already working with Siouxland Regional Transit System (SRTS). Sandy was hired as a dispatcher for SRTS in June 1996 and promoted to operations manager in February 2001.



Sandy truly does have a well-rounded transportation background; she owned four semi-tractors and managed all aspects of the long-haul operations. Prior to that, she worked for two years for a trucking firm in customer service and as a driver-recruiter. Sandy has been able to fall back on lessons learned over the years to excel in her current management position.

In the earlier part of her career, Sandy worked at Courage Homes with disabled children and adults. Those three years helped her to gain a better understanding of people with disabilities. This experience, along with her more recent transit background, created an opportunity for Sandy to be elected as secretary for the Siouxland Handicapped Association for 2003 and 2004.

Sandy holds a commercial driver's license, and at times, has filled in for drivers. As such, she has a great appreciation for that role. Sandy says, "It is important that our drivers are sensitive to the needs of our riders, and make a good impression on our customers so that they continue to want to ride with us."

Sandy grew up in Minnesota and attended high school in East Grand Forks. Since then, she has taken several business and computer software courses. Sandy says, "I enjoy taking nature walks, swimming, camping, sewing, reading, and karaoke. I have four children, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild. They are all wonderful, and I spend as much time with them as I can." Sandy is interested in learning more about transit in other parts of the state and looks forward to meeting and getting to know other transit managers.

Three vehicle operators take top spots at bus roadeo

Three Iowa transit vehicle operators are bound for a national level competition after their driving skills earned them top honors in Iowa's 19th Annual Public Transit Roadeo, held in Cedar Rapids June 11.

Operators moving on to the national competition representing Iowa and their public transit system are:

- Jean Dalsing of Dubuque, winner in the competition for van operators representing the Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority (RTA). Dalsing has received first-place honors in this division several times in previous years. Dalsing also placed second in the small-bus competition this year.
- Julie Mooney of Bettendorf won the competition for small-bus operators, representing the city of Bettendorf transit system. Although Mooney has ranked high in previous roadeos, this is the first time she has won this competition.
- Ben Walhood, a University of Iowa student hailing from Minot, ND, representing the University of Iowa CAMBUS transit system and currently living in Iowa City, took first place in the large-bus competition. This was Walhood's first time competing in the statewide roadeo.

Dalsing and Mooney will represent Iowa in the National Community Transit Roadeo sponsored by the Community Transportation Association of America. That association's annual meeting will be held in Orlando, Fla. in June 2006. Walhood will represent Iowa in the American Public Transit Association's International Bus Roadeo conducted in conjunction with its annual meeting in Dallas, Tex. later this month.

The Iowa Department of Transportation and Iowa Public Transit Association, with funding under a Federal Transit Administration program, cosponsor the annual roadeo. This year's event was held at the Rockwell-Collins complex in Cedar Rapids. The roadeo's purpose is to promote and provide recognition for safe driving skills by Iowa's public transit vehicle operators.

At this year's roadeo, 42 operators from 20 transit systems displayed their skills. Each operator performed a series of maneuvers that represent many of the actual situations they encounter carrying out their daily duties. Some of the maneuvers included were: pulling up to the curb at a bus stop closely flanked by parked cars; making left- and right-turns in narrow lanes that might be created by parked cars along a route; stopping short of an obstacle; and backing into parking stalls.

Five Seasons Transportation and Parking (FST&P) of Cedar Rapids hosted the event. Members of the Iowa Public Transit Association, representatives from the Iowa Department of Transportation, and local volunteers, including United States Army Reservists, judged the competition. Bill Hoekstra, FST&P director, said, "The contributions of the sponsors, volunteers and participants made this year's roadeo a success."

Roadeo, see next page



Jean Dalsing, RTA (Dubuque), wins in van competition.



Julie Mooney, Bettendorf Transit, takes first place in small bus competition.



First-time competitor Ben Walhood, U of I CAMBUS, ranks first in large bus competition.



Participants walk the course prior to the 19th Annual Public Transit Roadeo, held in Cedar Rapids June 11.

BUS ROADEO

Rodeo, from previous page



(Clockwise from top left) A rodeo contestant attempts to maneuver a narrow lane situation.

Randy Zobrist, River Bend Transit Executive Director, has fun driving a "Mini-bus" on the course.

Volunteer judges measures the distance to the curb as part of the obstacle course.



The top three winners in each division are as follows:

Van Division

First place – Jean Dalsing, Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority

Second place – Susan Davis, Keyline Transit, city of Dubuque

Third place – Rob Littschwager, Johnson County SEATS, Iowa City, a subcontractor to East Central Iowa Transit, Cedar Rapids

Small-Bus Division

First place – Julie Mooney, Bettendorf Transit System, city of Bettendorf

Second place - Jean Dalsing, Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority

Third place - Susan Davis, Keyline Transit, city of Dubuque

Large-Bus Division

First place – Ben Walhood, University of Iowa Cambus, Iowa City

Second place – Kevin Riley, Five Seasons Transportation and Parking, city of Cedar Rapids

Third place – Chris Wilcox, Five Seasons Transportation and Parking, city of Cedar Rapids

Director's Column,
from page 2

expanding the transit facilities across the state. I would like to extend my thanks to the committee members who volunteered their time in establishing this contract and for their continued efforts in completing this endeavor. Members of this committee are: Randy Zobrist, River Bend Transit, Davenport; Jim Burns, Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll; Rich Leners, CyRide, Ames; and Peter Hallock and J.P. Golinvaux of the OPT.

Urban ITS Integration Study

The Urban ITS Integration Study project has been initiated. The advisory committee has been created and its members include: Steve Spade, Des Moines MTA; Mark Munson, Keyline, Dubuque; Bill Hoekstra, Five Seasons Transportation and Parking, Cedar Rapids; Ron Logsdon, Iowa City Transit; and Dennis Hart, Clinton MTA. Committee members are currently reviewing the request for proposals (RFP). I expect the RFP to be published by Oct. 3, 2005, so that an award can be made around the first of the year to allow a project completion date of October 2006.

As always, if you have any questions or concerns about Iowa's public transit program or need any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me either via E-mail at michelle.mcenany@dot.iowa.gov or phone at 515-239-1659.

Michelle

Iowa DOT commends Iowa transit systems

The Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit (OPT) presented awards June 8 to acknowledge the operations and staff of Iowa's public transit systems.

OPT Director Michelle McEnany presented awards in four categories at an awards ceremony during the DOT-Iowa Public Transit Association's annual training conference held in Cedar Rapids. Recipients of the awards are as follows:

Special Achievement Award

Three transit systems were honored with special achievement awards; one each to represent the 16 regional transit systems, 12 large urban transit systems and seven small urban transit systems. In this same order, recognition for the lowest operating cost-per-ride for the year ending June 30, 2004, went to: North Iowa Area Council of Governments, headquartered in Mason City; University of Iowa Cambus, based in Iowa City; and Ottumwa Transit Authority.

Special Recognition

One each of the regional, large urban and small urban transit systems was singled out for obtaining the highest level of local match for transit operations as reported for the year ending June 30, 2004. In this same order, the following three transit systems were honored: East Central Iowa Council of Governments/East Central Iowa Transit, headquartered in Cedar Rapids; city of Iowa City, Iowa City Transit; and city of Clinton, Clinton Municipal Transit Administration.

Certificate of Appreciation

Ten managers or staff members, representing nine transit systems, were acknowledged for their role in serving as administrator of consortium procurement for the purchase of public transit vehicles in Iowa. Recipients are as follows: Carol Pelfrey and Mike Drottz of the Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority; Earl Henry, Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation/Northeast Regional Transit System, Decorah; Kevin Kramer, North Iowa Area Council of Governments/North Iowa Area Regional Transit System, Mason City; Steve Hoesel, Mid-Iowa Development Association Council of Governments, Fort Dodge; Marty Wymore, Region 6 Planning Commission/Peoplerrides, Marshalltown; Brian Schoon, Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission, Waterloo; Robyn Jacobson, East Central Iowa Council of Governments/East Central Iowa Transit, Cedar Rapids; Jim Burns, Region XII Council of Governments/Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll; and Pam Ward, 10-15 Regional Transit Agency, Ottumwa.

Special Acknowledgement

Special recognition was given to 13 transit systems for expanding public transit services to the people of Iowa through participation in the Job Access/Reverse Commute Program. Acknowledgement was given to the following agencies:

- Five Seasons Transportation and Parking, Cedar Rapids
- Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority, Des Moines
- Keyline Transit, Dubuque
- Metropolitan Transit Authority of Black Hawk County, Waterloo
- MuscaBus, Muscatine
- Ottumwa Transit Authority, Ottumwa
- Northeast Iowa Community Action Corporation/Northeast Regional Transit System, Decorah
- North Iowa Area Council of Governments/North Iowa Area Regional Transit System, Mason City
- Regional Transit Authority/Rides, Spencer
- Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority, Dubuque
- River Bend Transit, Davenport
- Region XII Council of Governments/Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll
- Southwest Iowa Planning Council/Southwest Iowa Transit Agency, Atlantic

McEnany said, "Last year Iowa's public transportation system provided Iowans with nearly 24 million rides. Iowans rely on public transportation to get to jobs, school, medical appointments, and community resources. We are very pleased with the results Iowa has been able to achieve in part by the support of local governments and dedicated transit system staff."

Iowa is served by 35 public transit systems. There are 19 urban transit systems, each providing transit services in one or more communities of more than 20,000 in population; 12 of these systems serve areas with greater than 50,000 in population. There are also 16-multi-county regional transit systems that provide transit services in all areas of the state.

Collaboration, from page 9

Support and financial assistance for this new program comes from the Scott County Health Department's Senior Health Vision Group Transportation Subcommittee and Generations Area on Aging. The program is a collaboration between Bettendorf Transit, Davenport CitiBus, River Bend Transit, health and human services agencies and volunteers.

For more information on the Transit Ambassador program, call any of the Iowa Quad-City transit providers: River Bend Transit, 563-386-1350; Bettendorf Transit, 563-344-4085; or Davenport Citibus, 563-888-2151.

September is National Preparedness Month

Preparing for disasters is something everyone can do. Establishing an emergency preparedness plan for our families and ourselves in case of fire, tornado or other potential threats helps us be better prepared to react. Simple things such as assembling a supply kit and developing a family communications plan are the same for both a natural or man-made emergency. Those plans should be reviewed and practiced periodically. Public transit is no exception.

Last year, nearly 24 million people rode public transit in Iowa. In many ways, riders are the eyes and ears of the public transit system. National Preparedness Month is a good time to remind passengers that they are encouraged to be aware of their surroundings and report any abandoned packages or other suspicious activity to transit system personnel or local law enforcement. A regular rider is probably the best person to notice when something looks out-of-place or suspicious.

For five weeks this summer, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) had transit systems in the United States at a high state of alert—code orange—due to the London bus and subway bombings in July. The Director of DHS indicated that he was aware of no specific threats, but said that there have been previous patterns of near simultaneous attacks that made the heightened state of alert appropriate. DHS dropped the alert level Aug. 12 back to elevated—code yellow; however, during those five weeks, Office of Public Transit Director Michelle McEnany encouraged increased awareness and vigilance in the area of system security. OPT asked transit systems in metropolitan areas (over 50,000 in population) to put their security plans into effect based on the threat level.

Although we are geographically located in the middle of the country, Iowa takes safety and security of our public transit riders seriously. Public transit is still one of the safest types of transportation and many security measures have been implemented not just as a result of 9/11, but for stepping up precautionary security measures in general. A couple of specific security improvements that are being made are on-board video surveillance cameras and fencing at facilities. More and more of Iowa's public transit vehicles are being purchased with security cameras. Another important area of focus, in addition to emergency response planning, is employee training and public awareness.

According to a statement made by the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District's (BART) Director Joel Keller, the federal government has spent \$18.1 billion on aviation security since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, but only \$250 million on mass transit security—yet mass transit carries 16 times the number of passengers each day as the airlines. Congress is only allocating \$150 million this year to improve mass transit security nationwide. (Information obtained from BART Web site <http://www.bart.gov/news/features/currentFeatures.asp>.)

2005

October

Oct. 3-4 - Iowa Transportation Commission tour/public input meeting, Council Bluffs

Oct. 29 - DOT vehicle and large equipment auction, Ames (For more information, contact Mike Holl at 515-239-1576.)

November

Nov. 1, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames

Nov. 11, DOT offices closed in observance of Veterans Day

Nov. 24-25, DOT offices closed in observance of Thanksgiving

Nov. 29 – Dec. 1 - Iowa Public Transit Association's Mid-Year Meeting, West Des Moines (For more information, contact Bev Thomas at 515-440-6057.)

December

Dec. 13 - Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames

Dec. 26 - DOT offices closed in observance of Christmas

For more detailed conference listings, see the following Web sites:

<http://www.apta.com/meetings> (conferences and calendar)

<http://www.ctaa.org/events> (CTAA calendar of events)

<http://www.ctaa.org/training> (CTAA training calendar)

http://www.fta.dot.gov/11053_ENG_HTML.htm (calendar of events)

http://www.fta.dot.gov/2432_ENG_HTML.htm (training and professional development)



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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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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