

CONNECTIONS

OFFICE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2001



Iowa receives federal funding for Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS)

By Kay Thede

The fiscal year 2001 Transportation Appropriations Act included a Congressional earmark resulting in \$2,187,252 available for intelligent transportation system deployment in Iowa. The funds were designated for public transit and traffic safety. The Iowa DOT was required to submit an application to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) by March 16, 2001, for approval of projects that will be funded. The funds require a 50 percent match from other funding sources.

The Iowa DOT project for the transit portion will include a statewide communications study, a statewide transit system needs assessment and deployment plan, development of regional architecture, and initial implementation of

the deployment plan. Implementation of individual transit system's ITS projects will depend on the needs assessment and deployment plan developed, and the amount of funding available after the study.

The FHWA will review and approve applications after the deadline. The approved project must begin by September 30, 2001. The goal of the statewide ITS study and implementation is to develop to the extent possible an interoperable system throughout the state.

Introducing the new Office of Public Transit

In March 2000 the Iowa Department of Transportation was reorganized, and as part of this reorganization, a Modal Division and the Office of Public Transit were created. In July 2000 an office director was hired, and recently the structure for the new Office of Public Transit was finalized with specific duties of the positions listed on page 6.

Transit training library

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. Each newsletter issue will highlight one of these resources (see the article on blood-borne pathogen training on page 3).

A complete listing of available training materials can be requested by calling Kay Williams at 515-239-1875.



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Director's Column

By Peggi Knight



Peggi Knight

The OPT staff and I met to develop a list of functions that are currently performed in the office. Then we asked the transit agencies and the FTA to rate the importance and performance of approximately 90 functions done

by office staff. All of the regional and small urban transit systems, and one half of the large urban systems responded to the survey. Thank you for all of the input and comments. I have used the survey information, input from the regional meetings and Federal Transit Administration to help realign duties and make more efficient use of staff time.

One of the most important functions identified by transit agencies is to serve as an advocate for public transit among legislators, constituents and the media. This is an area that received more emphasis as the office was realigned.

Another priority for the office will be updating the Transit Manager's Handbook. This important training function will be completed and maintained

by the Office of Public Transit in a searchable form path on the Internet and in a paper format.

The Iowa Department of Transportation recently participated in a state management review that was performed by a consultant for the Federal Transit Administration. This review has pointed out some areas that we will need to focus on to assure compliance from the transit agencies. This compliance with federal regulations is required for continued funding, therefore it will also be an area that we will focus some of our attention.

The survey also helped identify some functions that we are currently doing that may not be all that important to the transit agencies. As office duties were realigned, these functions will be de-emphasized.

“I have the privilege of working with a great group of people.”
Peggi Knight

I have included information about the details of the new office structure in the article about the Office of Public Transit which begins on the front page of this newsletter.

In January I announced a new set of staff assignments based on the addition of one more staff member in the Office of Public Transit. However, due to the current state budget situation, we will not be filling that position at this time. We have now gone back over our reorganization and, I believe, have come up with a team that will let us successfully address the needs of Iowa's transit community. The Office of Public Transit staff will be covering most of these functions as shown on page 6. We also will now be utilizing the services of Kay Thede, who is part of the Modal Division's Policy Section. She will administer the Transit DBE program, coordinate the update to the Transit Manager's Handbook, and develop transit policy papers, in addition to the duties she currently performs.

With these adjustments, the Office of Public Transit is looking forward to providing the transit community with the best service possible, and we expect this new organizational structure to facilitate that goal.

Money tight for vehicle replacement

By Peter Hallock

Iowa fared generally very well as Congress appropriated funds for transit capital this year. Iowa's transit systems will receive a total of \$11.9 million in earmarked federal transit capital funding. This is up from \$10.5 million last year and \$6.6 million the year before. Congress requires most of the funds this year, however, to go toward construction projects at specified locations around the state, leaving only \$2.5 million available to address the need to replace the aging bus fleets around the state. This is virtually the same as was available last year and down from \$3 million the year before. It is well short of the \$21.5 million worth of vehicle replacements which Iowa's transit systems identified as needed to replace aging existing vehicles, let alone to allow expansion to serve new transit needs.

To help address the need, Iowa's transit systems voted to take 20 percent of their federal formula transit assistance, which is normally used to help pay for the cost of operating transit services, and use that to supplement the Congressional earmark for statewide capital. This contributed approximately \$2.2 million more to the effort.

The Iowa Public Transit Association worked with Iowa DOT staff to determine which of the originally programmed vehicles should be funded with the monies available. The \$2.5 million in earmarked funds will be used to replace the vehicles with the highest needs ranking, based on vehicle age and accumulated mileage. A total of 11 vehicles (mostly large urban coaches) were at least partially funded. The formula funds were distributed based on input from peer groups involved in each formula program. The rural and small urban transit systems selected 20 smaller vehicles to be replaced, while the large urban transit systems (from communities between 50,000 and 200,000 population) chose to purchase eight and lease an additional nine smaller replacement vehicles.

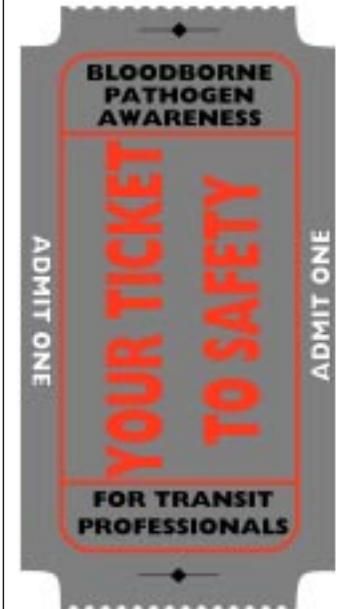
Several transit systems were also successful in appealing to their local planning agencies which are responsible for programming certain flexible transportation funds which can be used for either highway or transit purposes. Altogether these contributions brought in another \$1.7 million towards the bus replacement effort.

The Des Moines MTA was by far the most successful gaining funds to replace seven urban coaches, but six regional transit systems also prevailed, obtaining at least partial support for the purchase of nine more smaller replacement transit vehicles.

We applaud all of these efforts, including securing earmarked funds for vehicle replacement, committing formula funds, and seeking out flexible transportation funds toward this end. About \$6.4 million in federal dollars, plus the required local match, was committed to replace a total of 64 vehicles.

As we look to next year, however, we have to realize that the backlog of vehicles needing to be replaced keeps increasing. The 64 vehicles which will be replaced this year amounts to only a fraction of the 256 vehicles which were up for replacement. Securing increased capital funding for bus replacement needs to continue to be a top priority.

Blood-borne pathogen training available



Your Ticket to Safety: Bloodborne Pathogen Awareness for Transit Professionals

A 15-minute video, produced by Iowa State University for the Iowa Department of Transportation's public transit program, discusses the possible hazards involved with contact to body fluids, and the appropriate precautions and cleanup techniques in a passenger transportation setting. The program addresses the OSHA requirements involved, and the concept of "universal precautions." A newly revised companion pamphlet is also available for distribution to persons going through the training to help them retain the information.

State-level transit coordination council reactivated



By Peter Hallock

There are a myriad of state and federal programs that can help fund transportation of various passenger groups. Some programs, such as Iowa's State Transit Assistance or the federal programs administered by the Federal Transit Administration, are intended to support services open to all persons. Most of the other potential funding sources carry differing types of restrictions on the type of transportation which can be supported. Some funding can only support transportation of persons needing access to the services funded by a particular agency. Sometimes the funding can support any transportation need associated with a particular population subgroup (such as elderly persons, persons with disabilities, persons of specific ethnic background, etc.). The result of all this can be that, despite significant public investment in various transportation services, and even with vehicles going exactly when and where a person needs to go, there

are individuals not being served because they "fall through the cracks" in terms of program eligibility.

Iowa has been a leader in trying to address this problem. The Iowa Code requires every agency or organization which receives public funds for provision or purchase of passenger transportation services (other than public school transportation) to coordinate the funding and the services to maximize the benefits from that public expenditure. The Code designates the urban or regional transit systems as the focus of that coordination effort at the local level.

At the state level, the Code calls on the Iowa Department of Transportation and other state agencies to work together, and with local governments, to promote this concept of transit coordination.

Back in the early 1990s a group called the State-level Transportation Coordination Council was formed to assist the Iowa DOT in determining which agencies were in compliance with the Code's coordination mandate. The council was also to serve as a forum for the discussion of coordination issues, such as conflicts between funding program provisions that might be hindering local coordination efforts. It operated for several years, but then became inactive.

Two recent strategic planning efforts called for its resurrection. "Healthy Iowans – 2010," the Iowa Department of Public Health's strategic plan, asked that it be resurrected and expanded to serve as a forum for discussion of coordination issues and to oversee certain transportation education programs. "Iowa in Motion," the Department of Transportation's long-range plan, also called for it to be brought back and indicated that membership should be expanded to include the Iowa Department of Workforce Development, which administers the new "welfare-to-work" funds which can support transportation services, and

also the League of Cities to complete the concept of including major state and local funding sources for passenger transportation services.

The newly reconstituted council met for the first time on January 2001. The council is helping the DOT review rules associated with the Iowa Code's transportation coordination mandate, and will also be considering some of the other specific functions which groups have envisioned for them. Primarily, however, they will provide a forum to bring agencies together to discuss issues related to coordination and especially any institutional barriers which may need to be addressed.

Public transit in Italy

By Peggy Baer

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend four months living in central Rome. Among the many pleasures of this experience was not driving a car during the entire stay. In Rome, we most often walked to our destination, but frequently took public buses or the subway. A ticket cost 1,500 lire (75 cents) for 75 minutes of travel. The tickets can be used on any bus and on the metro. The ticket had to be validated in a machine as you entered the bus, and often times the machines didn't work. However, if the "bus police" found you without a validated ticket, the fine was 100,000 lire (\$50).

The bus system in Rome uses regular buses, articulated buses, electric trams, and small electric buses that hold about 20 people. We rode on all of these. The small electric buses are quiet and able to traverse the small narrow streets in the heart of Rome. For \$5 one can buy a guide to the bus system which lists the many routes and their stops, but no time schedule. Generally, we waited no longer than 10 minutes for any bus.

The metro has only two lines that form an "X" and meet at the train station. This system was built in the 1930s and hasn't been significantly enlarged since the completion of the system in the 1950s.



An electric minibus navigates a tight Roman street

Although there are plans to increase the system, any excavation in Rome inevitably results in the discovery of more ancient ruins and construction is halted.

Outside of Rome, we had the opportunity to use large touring motor coaches, hydrofoils and ferries, a funicular rail line on Capri, Eurostar intercity trains, the Milan subway system, and, of course, many taxis. The best part of public transit in Italy is it's readily available and inexpensive. The worst part is they are usually crowded and offer abundant opportunities to pickpockets and thieves.



A fully decorated city bus in Parma, Italy

Introducing the new Office of Public Transit



Peggi Knight

Office Director

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Peter Hallock

- Update and maintain State Management Plan
- Review and update Administrative Rules
- Coordinate/prepare transit update E-mails to transit agencies
- Maintain transit agreement binder
- Coordinate and conduct compliance reviews
- Participate in State Level Transportation Coordination Advisory Council
- Serve as a planning liaison
- Assist office director
- Serve as acting office director in director's absence

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Pamella Lee

- Develop/maintain Statewide Transit Improvement Program (STIP)
- Administer transit equipment management system
- Administer Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grants application processes
- Coordinate office computer applications development
- Assist with compliance reviews
- Administer/coordinate State Transit Assistance Program

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Donna Johnson

- Conduct/coordinate transit training program
- Administer approved FTA grants
- Administer Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP)
- Administer drug and alcohol testing oversight program
- Coordinate development and distribution of the quarterly Transit Newsletter

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J.P. Golinvaux

- Provide technical assistance to approximately half of the state's transit systems
- Serve as transit procurement specialist
- Serve as intercity bus liaison

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Samil Sermet

- Provide technical assistance to approximately half of the state's transit systems
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Kay Williams

- Prepare and process joint participation agreements
- Process training fellowship applications and payment requests
- Maintain/circulate transit training library materials
- Process 324A forms
- Conduct private sector clearinghouse function
- Coordinate Transit Directory updates
- Provide general clerical support to the office staff

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2001

May

May 20-25

Community Transportation Association of America Expo 2001: Reaching New Heights, Salt Lake City, Utah
800-527-8279; www.ctaa.org/expo

June

June 6-8

Iowa Public Transit Association/Iowa DOT Transit Training Conference, Hilton Hotel, Sioux City, Iowa

June 9

Iowa Public Transit Bus Rodeo
Sioux City, Iowa

June 18-20

APTA State Affairs Conference, co-sponsored by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the Community Transportation Association of America, Hyatt Regency, Buffalo, N.Y. For information, contact APTA's Rich Weaver at 202-496-4809 or by E-mail at rweaver@apta.com.

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/intro/calendar/cal.html>

U.S.DOT revises drug and alcohol test rule

By Donna Johnson

The procedural requirements for drug and alcohol testing are changing slightly due to a rule revision published by U.S.DOT Dec. 19, 2000. The changes apply to both testing done by public transit systems under Federal Transit Administration rules and testing by human service agencies subject to Federal Highway Administration rules for testing of drivers holding commercial driver's licenses.

The original procedural rule [49 CFR part 40] dates from 1988. The revision is intended to make the rule more clear, in part by restructuring the rule based on subject matter. It also incorporates recent legal interpretations and reflects changes in technology which have effected the testing industry.

A few of the changes became effective in January, 30 days after the publication of the revised rule, but most of the changes will be effective Aug. 1, 2001. If you have not yet reviewed a copy of the revised rule, it is available via the Internet at:

<http://www.dot.gov/ost/dapc/>

If you are unable to access this site and need a hard copy of the rule, call Donna Johnson at 515-233-7875.



Metro Magazine Award

Robert Bourne, director of transportation for CyRide in Ames, was named one of the Top Ten Most Respected Transit Managers in the U.S. and Canada by the editors of *Metro Magazine*. Nominations were received from readers and the editorial advisory board of the magazine.



Robert Bourne, director of transportation for CyRide in Ames

APTA Award

The Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) has received an award from the American Public Transit Administration (APTA) for its "demonstrated innovation and creativity" in delivering "welfare-to-work" programs to the public.

Congratulations to both of these transit systems for their demonstration of excellence.

Iowa's intercity bus carriers make service accessibility a reality

By J.P. Golinvaux

When the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed in 1990, leaders in the over-the-road bus (OTRB) industry knew the process of implementing both the spirit and letter of the law would be very challenging. Two factors made the ADA-mandated requirements particularly challenging to the OTRB industry: 1) virtually every carrier in the industry has had some financial difficulties; and 2) making the services the industry provides "accessible" would require very substantial capital investments that held little prospect of improving any carrier's bottom line.

To its credit, and perhaps out of necessity, the OTRB industry

has insisted that its associations find ways of making the ADA regulations workable. It has now been a decade since passage of the act. And, it is noteworthy that each of the carriers that have been able to continue regularly scheduled intercity bus (ICB) service to lowans have made considerable progress in efforts to make their services accessible. Recent coach purchases and coach modifications under a federal assistance program the Iowa DOT administers substantially expand the scope of ICB service accessibility.

Recent accessibility milestones that have been reached by Iowa's ICB carriers:

- Burlington Lines and Jefferson Lines have each purchased two accessible, over-the-road coaches. Each carrier was assisted in purchasing one coach, each with 45-47 percent federal 5311(f) funding.
- Greyhound has retrofitted two of the buses in its fleet with Iowa's formula 5311(f) federal funding.
- Greyhound has developed a useful brochure, "Services for Passengers with Disabilities." The brochure describes features of service that are of particular interest to passengers with disabilities. If you would like copies of the brochure, go to www.greyhound.com.

CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS is a quarterly publication of the Iowa Department of Transportation. It is distributed free of charge to public transit systems, agencies providing human service transportation, intercity bus carriers, and other interested individuals and organizations.

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