

CONNECTIONS

OFFICE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT NEWSLETTER • FALL 2001



Transit Web site redesigned

by Pam Lee



We've redesigned our Web site. The new site has been designed and developed to allow for easier navigation, interactivity and future expansion. Our Web site now offers many new features.

Along with the links to each of Iowa's 35 transit systems, we've made it easier for you to contact our staff and others at the Iowa DOT who work with transit issues. We are each just a click away. Log on to iatransit.com and you can read background information about each of us. You'll also find a direct link to our e-mail addresses.

A maintenance page has been added where we will post problems and solutions related to vehicle maintenance issues. If you're curious about the Public Transit Management System

(PTMS), we have developed a PTMS calculator for your use. When you enter the necessary vehicle information, the calculator will determine how many PTMS points your vehicle has accumulated. For the transit history buff, we have added a transit history page. This page allows you to read how transit got its start in Iowa and all the changes that have affected transit over the years. This page also has links to individual transit system histories. Our Web site still has many familiar features where information can be found pertaining to transit regulations, funding and legislation, and intercity bus routes in Iowa.

We hope our newly designed site will give you more information at your fingertips. Log on to iatransit.com and check out our new Web site today!

Request for e-mail addresses

Due to recent budget cuts in state government, the Office of Public Transit will be moving from a paper version to an electronic-only version of our CONNECTIONS newsletter.

To continue receiving this newsletter, please send your e-mail address to Kay Williams, Secretary, Office of Public Transit. Kay's e-mail address is kay.williams@dot.state.ia.us.



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Director's Column

By Peggi Knight



Public transit in Iowa is facing some complex challenges. Funding cuts from state transit assistance and other funding sources are making it more complicated for transit agencies to continue to provide valuable services to Iowans. Although this is a difficult time, the services that we provide are more important than ever, and we need to move forward with renewed determination.

I am proud of the progress that is being made through some joint initiatives of the Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) and the Office of Public Transit. I feel these initiatives will clearly have a positive impact on transit in Iowa.

To communicate the importance of transit, the Office of Public Transit and the IPTA have initiated a campaign to enhance the public's awareness and image of transit in Iowa. In the short term we will be working together to develop an informational

campaign directed toward decision-makers. It is very important that the impact of transit on the lives of Iowans is understood. In the long term, IPTA and the DOT plan to develop a comprehensive communications strategy for public transit.

Another effort to communicate the significance of transit is the development of the new Iowa public transit Web site (www.iatransit.com). We have worked to develop this site to serve the needs of the Iowa public transit community, and our customers. The intent for the Web site is to distribute information to the general public about transit services available in their area, and to provide a forum for exchange of data among Iowa transit agencies. We have direct links to transit agency's individual Web pages, or will post selected information for those agencies that do not have their own sites. Our hope is that it becomes a valuable resource to many. Pam Lee has written an article on page one to introduce you to additional

features of the Web site. Please visit the site and give us your feedback about the current information and any additional features you feel would be beneficial.

Another important initiative is the implementation of the IPTA strategic planning effort. The Iowa DOT has been working with IPTA members from the legislative, training/education and image committees to move these efforts forward in a coordinated endeavor. I have also had the opportunity recently to participate with the IPTA board in its monthly meetings and I feel the cooperation and coordination of effort that this develops has been a very positive experience.

Quality service from the transit industry is more critical than ever. Let's not lose sight of the plans and work that has been accomplished. The Office of Public Transit will continue to provide support, information and encouragement to the transit agencies throughout the ensuing challenges.

Transit ITS project begins

By Kay Thede

The ITS project to develop a statewide transit ITS deployment plan is underway. A request for proposals (RFPs) is 'on the street' asking firms to submit proposals for the completion of a statewide deployment plan and transit regional architecture. Proposals are due in November.

Tasks expected during the development of the plan include an on-site assessment of 16 regional and eight small urban transit agencies in Iowa. The assessment will include ITS-related technologies currently used, current communication system(s), needs of the agency for ITS to improve operational productivity, staff capability to manage information technology, and financial capability to sustain a system. The consultant will also be asked to determine whether communication and ITS resources are available to meet transit system needs. Statewide transit architecture will be developed to determine the various systems that transit will need to interact with. The final product will be a statewide deployment plan, with recommendations as to the most effective deployment of ITS funds. Anticipated completion of Phase I is September 2002. Phase II, the actual deployment of ITS applications in Iowa's transit systems, will begin after the plan is developed.



ITS project, see page 5

Regulatory compliance reviews for rural transit systems begin

By Peter Hallock

There are wide ranges of federal and state regulations that Iowa's public transit systems must comply with, especially as a recipient of public funds. It is often difficult for individual transit managers and their staff to keep track of them all. Part of the technical assistance that the Office of Public Transit (OPT) offers to the state's public transit systems is to help keep track of what is required and to help the transit systems monitor their own compliance with all these rules. It is in everyone's interest for the state to work with the local agencies to make sure rules are followed, because noncompliance could threaten the continuation of needed services.

OPT approaches this assistance in various ways. As new requirements come up, every effort is made to inform transit systems and provide a brief "highlights" analysis, as part of the electronic "Transit Updates." Those requirements directly referenced in the federal and state funding agreements have been collected into an agreement binder (now available in electronic form) for easy reference. Other types of requirements are discussed in the Iowa Transit Managers Handbook, currently being updated. The legal requirements are also covered in training, including new manager orientations and focused seminars.

A new function, which grew out of input received from OPT's customers last year, is a field compliance review. The idea is for OPT staff to sit down with the transit system's management to go over various regulations and help the system's personnel analyze whether there are things the transit system can do to achieve greater compliance or possibly to make the compliance process easier.

Review questions were developed earlier this year, and discussed with the Iowa Public Transit Association at its summer meeting. There are approximately 260 questions covering topics such as ADA compliance, finances/contracting, eligibility/civil rights, procurement/capital management, and drug and alcohol testing. The full set of questions can be downloaded from the new transit Web site, www.iatransit.com. They all relate to various regulatory requirements, though not all of them would be strictly termed compliance questions.

Two pilot reviews have recently been conducted to test both the questions and the proposed format for the reviews. The Ottumwa Transit Authority (which also operates regional transit service for 10-15 Regional Transit) and River Bend Transit out of Davenport, volunteered to be the first systems reviewed using the new format. A couple of the questions were found to be duplicative and a few others



(Top) Pam Ward, OTA, meets with OPT's Peter Hallock for program compliance review.



(Left) Randy Zobrist, RBT, looks up information in response to OPT's review of rural transit systems.

have now been reworded. Both transit managers liked the format of starting the review in the afternoon and continuing the next morning. The evening break seemed to give everyone a chance to digest the information and keep the level of intensity down. Both managers liked the idea of discussing alternative ways of addressing the requirements as part of the assessment process. In both cases, participants agreed that discussing the requirements specific to one's own system helped with understanding the rules, even on topics that had

previously been specifically covered in seminars. Everyone agreed it was beneficial for transit system staff to have read through the questions in advance and prepared tentative answers before sitting down for the review.

Plans are for OPT to conduct a review with at least one transit system per month, which would allow us to get to each rural transit system every other year. For those systems providing direct services, the process will take about one day, based on the afternoon/morning format discussed

Compliance Review, see page 12

Economic downturn affecting transit agencies

Transit Funding

Public transit agencies are funded from several sources, many of which are being adversely affected by the downturn in the economy or other forces. Transit agencies will face challenges in responding to the reductions while continuing to meet the transportation needs of Iowans. The various funding sources are briefly discussed and possible impacts to transit are identified.

State Transit Assistance - State Transit Assistance (STA) funds are generated from one-twentieth of the first four cents of the state's vehicle use tax in a standing appropriation. STA funds can be used by transit agencies to support operational budgets or for capital purchases. However, nearly all of the STA funds are used for operations, accounting for approximately 31 percent of total operating expenses for regional systems and 12 percent of operating expenses for urban systems. The percentage of each transit system's operating budget that STA represents varies by system. STA is a small percent of operations in large urban systems (8 percent in Des Moines), compared to a small urban transit system (52 percent in Mason City.) The STA share of regional system operating budgets also varies from 24 percent in Region 2 to 46 percent in Region 16.

STA funds are susceptible to state's General Fund reductions because they flow through the General Fund before the Iowa Department of Transportation distributes them to the transit systems. The FY 2002 reduction for STA was \$659,820, a 6 percent reduction from an early projection of use tax revenue.

Since STA is based on vehicle use tax receipts, it is also susceptible to economic influences. The use tax fund had been increasing each year since 1992. Iowa transit agencies set budgets for the upcoming fiscal year based on STA projections developed by the Iowa Department of Transportation. Actual use tax revenues have not kept up with projections, and current projections have been adjusted downward another 3 percent from the estimates distributed in May. Projections are down more than 10 percent from the estimates distributed in January.

Continued declining statewide tax receipts have led to additional proposed cuts in state government budgets and may impact the STA funds available for the remainder of FY 2002 and FY 2003.

Federal transit formula assistance

Most funding under urban and non-urban funding formula programs is used for support of operations. Federal fiscal year 2002 funding is expected to increase slightly, unless there are last-minute cuts to accommodate emergency spending. Formula amounts for Iowa transit agencies may decline for FFY 2003 when new census data is used in compilations. Population is a factor in all federal allocation formulas, and Iowa's overall growth has been lower than other parts of the country.

Federal capital funding - Most funding for Iowa's capital needs comes from the discretionary bus and bus facility program, which is entirely earmarked by Congress. Although Iowa has been successful in obtaining funding, the funding is not sufficient to meet bus replacement needs. Federal capital funding requires a 17 to 20 percent local match, which will become more difficult as state funding decreases.

Federal Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program - The JARC program assists transit agencies in developing new or expanded transportation services that connect welfare recipients and other low-income persons to jobs and other employment-related services. The program in Iowa has been used by transit agencies to increase service to areas not previously served, and to expand evening and weekend hours of operation.

The JARC program is a 50/50 match program. A significant source of matching funds for Iowa transit systems has been the Iowa Department of Human Services through the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funding. The Department of Human Services has proposed elimination of the \$816,000 in TANF match for the JARC program from its FY 2003 budget. This decision will have a negative impact on transit agencies' ability to use the federal program.

Local fares - Transit agencies use a variety of fare structures. Passenger fares recovering the actual costs of operating the system would be too high to maintain ridership.

Local tax levies (city property tax) and local government support - Municipalities can levy a tax to support public transit or use general property tax levies to support transit. Nearly all of the larger cities with transit systems (with the exception of Bettendorf, Coralville and Mason City) have a tax levy specifically for transit. Very few smaller cities levy a tax to support the regional systems.

Contracts with other public agencies - Transit agencies contract with various agencies such as Human Services, Area Agencies on Aging, Head Start, work activity centers, Work Force Development, and public schools to provide transportation services. Funding from other state agencies used for transportation of clients is also decreasing or being eliminated. Sheltered workshops and work activity centers are losing funding. Transit agencies will not be able to provide the service without compensation from the sheltered workshop. Area Agencies on Aging experienced initial budget cuts this year, and are expecting an additional 7 percent cut. These cuts translate into transportation cuts, often of a greater proportion than other categories. Head Start agencies, community colleges, and regent institutions' cuts will also have an impact on transit agencies in Iowa.

New IPTA legislative committee fighting to keep transit funding

By Rose Lee, Executive Director, Regional Transit Authority/RIDES (Spencer)

The Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) has its work cut out for it trying to educate legislators as to what is happening to public transit in this time of declining economy and General Fund budget cuts. We are already experiencing a 16 percent decline in overall funding from the figures Iowa DOT provided for budgeting purposes last January. Part of that is the direct result of a decline in use tax revenues, and part of it is a result of a legislative decision last May to divert part of the use tax from transit assistance to other General Fund purposes. We were already planning to make our case to discourage further cuts next fiscal year, but now there is a proposal to cut another 7 to 10 percent out of State Transit Assistance yet this fiscal year.

As chair of the IPTA's Legislative Committee, I recognize our message will be difficult to convey. We recognize that many valuable state programs have been cut and are facing additional cuts. We also recognize the state must make cuts to bring its expenditures in line with shrinking revenues. Because of this, we need to help legislators understand that the state appropriation for public transit is being hit from two sides.

Most programs operating out of the state's General Fund get a set number of dollars appropriated to them. This is not the case for public transit. When transit use tax funding

was transferred to the General Fund years ago, the Legislature established a mechanism that each year appropriates to public transit an amount equal to transit's share of use tax revenues during that year. The governor uses an estimated figure in his budget, but, by law, transit can receive only 1/20th of the first four cents of use tax collected on the sale of motor vehicles and accessory equipment. In our current declining economy, the level of state assistance to public transit goes down automatically to adjust for the state's declining revenues.

Unfortunately, it appears these facts were overlooked in last spring's effort to adjust the state budget to accommodate the overall decline in revenues for the General Fund. A fixed amount of the original use-tax estimate was diverted to other General Fund programs; this meant double jeopardy for transit. Transit lost funding both directly due to the decline in use-tax revenue, as well as the diversion of use tax to other programs.

Local agencies that have purchased rides for their clients or generally supported rides for groups they represent are also adjusting their budgets due to state cuts to other programs. Cuts in their funding programs also have a potential to greatly impact transit revenue and operations.

It is critical that we get this message across as the Legislature is asked to make further cuts to balance this

year's budget and the budget for next year.

The IPTA Legislative Committee is working with the Transit Image Committee to increase the public's awareness of how Iowa benefits from the availability of public transit services, and help the public understand how much has been lost during the past year as a result of the funding cuts. We are forming coalitions with other groups that are natural allies of transit to make the point that transit is vital to many programs and shouldn't continue to be subjected to the disproportionate cuts that have taken place so far.

Other members of the Legislative Committee include Steve Jacobs, executive director for Project Concern based in Dubuque, serving Delaware, Dubuque and Jackson counties; Steve Spade, general manager of the Metropolitan Transit Authority in greater Des Moines; Amber Clausen, director of Siouxland Regional Transit, which serves a five county area surrounding Sioux City; Bob Bourne, Ames Transit Agency director of transportation; Walt Stephenson, general manager of Waterloo MET; and Dan Jensen, general manager, Sioux City Transit. The committee has been working closely with the staff of the Office of Public Transit to coordinate legislative priorities.

The bottom line is that we need your help to communicate this message.

ITS project, from page 2

Steve Andrle, director of the Center for Transportation Research and Education (CTRE) at Iowa State University, is the project manager. CTRE's role is to assist in the development of the request for proposals, consultant selection, organization of the ITS Transit Expo, and monitoring the project. A project team of Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) members and Iowa DOT staff assisted CTRE in the development of the RFP, and will assist in consultant selection.

Project team members include: Pam Ward, Ottumwa Transit Authority; Amber Clausen, Siouxland Regional Transit System; Brian McClatchey, University of Iowa/CAMBUS; Rich Stone, Marshalltown Municipal Transit; Walt Stevenson, Black Hawk County Metro Transit Authority; Rose Lee, Regional Transit Authority/RIDES; Steve Jacobs, Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson Counties Regional Transit Authority; and Peter Hallock, Craig Markley, Peggi Knight and Kay Thede, Iowa DOT.

If you would like more information regarding this project, please contact Kay Thede at 515-239-1048, or e-mail at kay.thede@dot.state.ia.us.

Who's who in Iowa transit?

By Donna Johnson

"New kid on the block"

Welcome Richard "Rich" Stone to the ranks of public transit management in Marshalltown



**Richard Stone, Manager,
Marshalltown Municipal Transit**

Some of you may already know Rich as he was the Story County manager for public transit service provided under contract to Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) from 1997 through June 2001. He will now be adding fixed-route service operation to his previous experience of working with dial-a-ride and contracted service, and his 10 years of experience in the automotive after-market field.

After accepting an offer for employment from the City of Marshalltown, Rich was handed the torch from Karlyne vonKrog, former manager for this urban transit system. In July, Rich started commuting from Ames to Marshalltown on a daily basis to start his new venture as manager for Marshalltown Municipal Transit (MMT).

Rich holds a bachelor of arts degree in pastoral ministries from Crown College, St. Bonifacius, Minn. He is also a certified Passengers Assistance Service and Safety (PASS) trainer and holds a commercial driver's license (CDL), which always comes in handy when you work with public transit. Rich has been married for 14 years and has three young daughters. Congratulations, Rich, on your career advancement!

"At the other end of the spectrum"

After 27 years in regional transportation, Rose Lee, executive director of the Regional Transit Authority (RTA)/RIDES based in Spencer, is a very familiar face. Hired in May 1974 as the service coordinator for the newly developed Area Agency on Aging (AAA), a program of Iowa Lakes Community College, Rose developed a fledgling senior transportation service. Using one used 64-passenger school bus and a leased Chevy station wagon, service was launched.

In 1975 Rose wrote an application for one of the first Section 16b2 (now Section 5310) vehicles to coordinate service with the AAA and a sheltered workshop in Emmet County. In February 1977, on the day of her son's birth, her agency was the recipient of six more vehicles. In October 1979, just two months after the birth of her daughter, Rose finalized the development of



**Rose Lee, Executive Director RTA/
RIDES**

the Regional Transit Authority as a freestanding, private not-for-profit corporation.

During the oil embargo of the 1980s, oil companies were fined for overcharging the public. The federal government ruled that reparations would be made in a manner that would pay back the general public and incorporate energy conservation. Our state legislature determined that public transit would be an appropriate program to benefit from the petroleum overcharge. Under Rose's direction, making use of petroleum overcharge funding, the RTA built one of the first regional transit administration/maintenance facilities, which opened officially in October 1988. With a capital discretionary earmark, funded under the Section 5309 program, the RTA was able to expand their facility in 1996 to accommodate 12 vehicles inside, plus 40 more outdoors.

Rose has been very active in the business of transportation. She has served as the president, vice president of regional transit, secretary/treasurer, member at large, chair-elect and, is currently, the legislative chairperson for the Iowa Public Transit Association. In addition, she served as the state delegate for the Community Transit Association of America (CTAA). She presently serves as the chairperson for the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP). In 1994, the RTA received the Regional System of the Year award from the Iowa DOT.

Rose currently manages 16 full-time and 50 part-time employees and has approximately 70 vehicles in the RTA fleet. "The last 27 years have gone fast. Things have really changed from our humble beginnings to a fleet of 70 vehicles," said Rose. "Over the years we've shifted from a client-specific organization to coordinating service for all members of our communities. Our goal is to enhance the quality of life for Iowans by providing a quality transportation service we can all enjoy. I see myself taking a more active role in promoting coordination in our service area for the benefit of our communities and our customers," Rose added.

The RTA serves Buena Vista, Clay, Dickinson, Emmet, Lyon, O'Brien, Osceola, Palo Alto and Sioux counties.

Transits' support and commitment to local communities

By Donna Johnson

Public transit systems in Iowa are committed to supporting their communities by providing transportation services in various ways throughout the state. Many people depend on the services these agencies provide, not just for daily transportation, but also as a way to take part in organized community activities. This quarter there were many stories to choose from. Here are just a few of the ways public transit agencies continue to provide ongoing support and commitment to their local communities:

On September 12, one day after the horrible tragedies that occurred at the World Trade Centers in New York, the Pentagon, and Washington, D.C., Ottumwa Transit Authority (OTA) transported volunteers to 11 different agencies sponsored by the United Way of Wapello County for the Day of Caring. This activity was planned prior to the attacks on our nation. The organizers for the Day of Caring event decided this activity needed to go forward. About 40 volunteers gave of their day to learn more about these agencies and lend a hand. These volunteers assisted agencies that are trying to support individuals to make their lives better.

Burlington Urban Service (BUS) annually provides free rides to support the public library's summer reading program. They also transport senior citizens free of charge

to the city's annual Fourth of July fire works and band concert in Crapo City Park.

The Des Moines MTA provided state fair shuttle service once again this year. For just 50 cents for adults and 25 cents for children aged 11 and under, people could ride from the state capitol to the gates of the Iowa State Fairgrounds. This year the MTA added another convenient shuttle at the Center Street Park and Ride just south of I-235. Ridership increased 48 percent from the previous year, with a total of 102,668 rides provided to state fairgoers.

Another event the Des Moines MTA assisted with was the Allianz Golf championship at Glen Oaks Gold Community in West Des Moines. MTA provided 20,679 rides for spectators of the golf event. "With the inclement weather toward the end of the week's event, MTA--along with the Allianz and city officials--quickly developed alternate parking and busing plans for the weekend so spectators could park on hard surface lots," said Sheri Kyras, MTA's assistant general manager. HomeCare Services, Inc., the contract service provider under Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) for Dallas County, assisted the Des Moines MTA by providing nearly 900 rides for persons with disabilities. "Everything was going well and people were having fun until a tornado

hit the area," said Marilyn Heikes, HomeCare Services executive director. "Fortunately, the driver was able to fill his bus and take people to safety. There were no injuries to spectators or staff," Heikes added.

RAGBRAI, the Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, is another event where riders and spectators are welcomed with transportation services as a means of getting around town.

Sioux City Transit (SCT) collaborated with the RAGBRAI Association to turn a high mileage 1982 Ford Ward bus into a mobile billboard to welcome riders and encourage overnight visitors to try transit during their stay in Sioux City. Volunteers created the RAGBRAI-inspired paint theme and the RAGBRAI Association bore the cost. This bus hasn't just been around the block; although currently used as a back up vehicle for Sioux City Transit, over the years it has been used as a front line vehicle in both central and eastern Iowa.

Coralville Transit provided shuttle services to campsites and eating establishments for the 2001 ride as they did in 1995 when the riders rode through their area that year. Many other transit systems were also actively involved in providing shuttles for Grinnell, Sioux City, Perry and Muscatine, to name a few. A few Iowa transit managers and DOT staff also rode along the RAGBRAI route. Some may have even met one of the numerous New York City firefighters who rode the annual bike ride across Iowa who lost their life as part of the New York City rescue effort. In particular, some of those riders were from FDNY Ladder 3 located in the southern part of Manhattan, just a few blocks from the World Trade Center. Their acts of bravery and sacrifice of self for others is testimony that people do care. Our prayers go out to the members of the New York fire and police departments, their family, friends and loved ones.



Public transit in Turkey

By Samil Sermet

This year's vacation took me, once again, to my hometown and country to visit family, friends and loved ones. My wife, children and I have made the 7,000-mile trip to Turkey many times. This year we had the pleasure of showing my new daughter-in-law the sites in Turkey. My daughter was unable to come along this year, but it was especially enjoyable for my son to introduce his bride to family and friends.

The city of Eskisehir, my hometown, is located in northwest Turkey about 200 miles southeast of Istanbul. Eskisehir is an industrial city of 450,000 and home to two large universities.

While automobile ownership has increased dramatically in Turkey during the last two decades, gas prices, at nearly \$3.50 per gallon, limit usage to mostly weekend leisure travel. Fortunately, for us, we stayed with my mother during our visit. Her house is centrally located, so we did most of our traveling on foot.

Even though on vacation, I was still thinking of public transit. That is clear from the many photos I took that buses and transportation are of interest to me everywhere I go. Eskisehir, as any other Turkish city, offers various transportation alternatives. A one-mile ride in a taxicab will cost around \$1.50. The minimum fare is 50 cents with 12 and one-half cent increments for every 200 meters. Eskisehir currently has about 550 taxicabs. Shared-ride taxis,



operating on designated routes, provide rides for 25 cents. About 200 shared-ride taxis are in operation. People can also travel for just 20 cents in any one of the 200, 10-passenger vans that operate on designated routes. More than 50 percent of the taxicabs have conversion kits installed to allow them to operate on liquid petroleum gas (LPG), in addition to being gasoline powered. In the newer version, the gas tank is installed in space actually designed for a spare tire. The cost of this type of conversion is about \$500.

Eskisehir is also served by 150 large buses, of which 120 are private. Of the remaining buses, 10 are articulated buses made by ICARUS of Hungary. The rest are regular coaches made by Mercedes and BMC. Since 1995 the bus fleet has been transitioning from a city-owned and operated service, to privately-owned and operated. As a distinction, all city-owned buses are painted red.

Transit in Turkey, see page 9



(Top) A city-owned articulated bus enroute. **(Middle)** A privately-owned van that operates on a designated route. **(Bottom)** A taxi stand in Eskisehir.



www.I-235.com

Iowa DOT launches I-235 Web site

By Donna Johnson

The Iowa DOT has launched a new Web site, www.I-235.com, as a one-stop source for the most up-to-date information on the reconstruction of the 14-mile freeway. Suggestions on alternate routes will also be posted to minimize inconvenience for commuters and businesses during the five-year reconstruction.

"I-235.com will offer commuters and businesses the complete schedule of planned construction and the most up-to-date information on construction progress once we start work next year. The information on the site will help commuters choose the best routes to avoid construction-related traffic congestion," says Marty Sankey, I-235 project manager for the DOT.



The \$423 million project will reconstruct I-235 to modern design standards with three through travel lanes in

each direction the entire length of the freeway. Some sections will be four lanes in each direction, and auxiliary lanes will be located between many of the interchanges. Safety is one of the primary objectives of the new freeway design. Several new bridges, as well as redesign and improvement of entrance and exit ramps, are also included in this project. Work is scheduled to begin in 2002 and be completed in 2006.

Another feature of I-235.com is that it will provide bus transportation schedules, information on alternative

routes, and answers to frequently asked questions. To reduce freeway congestion during construction and beyond, the DOT will encourage increased use of alternative transportation means – like buses, carpools, and vanpools – and businesses will be encouraged to provide bus passes, implement flexible schedules, and allow workers to telecommute when possible.

Transit in Turkey, from page 8

Many employees of large private companies enjoy employee shuttles that operate from several central locations to the industrial park. Private companies provide the shuttles. Military and civilian personnel that work at the military base have their own shuttle.

Seniors, persons with disabilities, and police officers ride free on all buses. Students and military personnel pay half fare. The remaining adults pay full fare of 20 cents. Passengers are required to purchase a second ticket for transfers. The longest route is 10 miles. None of the buses are wheelchair accessible.

A veteran city bus driver belonging to a union makes about \$300 a month. To put this in perspective, the government-set minimum wage is \$100 a month.

Federal Procurement Training Conference

By Donna Johnson

A Technical Assistance Grantee Conference, referred to as “Partnering for Success,” was held at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Des Moines Sept. 11-12. Nearly 70 people participated in this conference to gain a better understanding of federal procurement rules. Welcoming remarks were made by Leah Russell on behalf of Mokhtee Ahmad, regional administrator of the Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) Region VII office in Kansas City, Mo. Dorrie Aldrich, associate administrator for administration, FTA, Washington, D.C., was the keynote speaker.

Reginald Lovelace facilitated the conference with speakers Lucy Jackson, director, Office of Procurement, and William Jones, FTA Region VI. Jackson and Lovelace both flew in from FTA in Washington, D.C., to share their expertise on procurement issues. Jackson spoke

primarily on procurement rules and recent changes while Jones, FTA Region VI, Dallas, Texas, covered Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) initiatives.

Sept. 11 was a sad day for our country, one that will long be remembered. While many participants and speakers were still in transit and tuned in to the news on their radios, others were huddled together around television monitors at the hotel to see the nationwide broadcasts of devastating tragedies taking place in New York City and Washington, D.C. People everywhere viewed in disbelief. Although shocked and saddened, we each knew that we somehow had to continue on. As you might imagine, this reprehensible attack on our nation had a great impact on the conference as well. Four scheduled speakers and several people who had registered for this conference were unable to

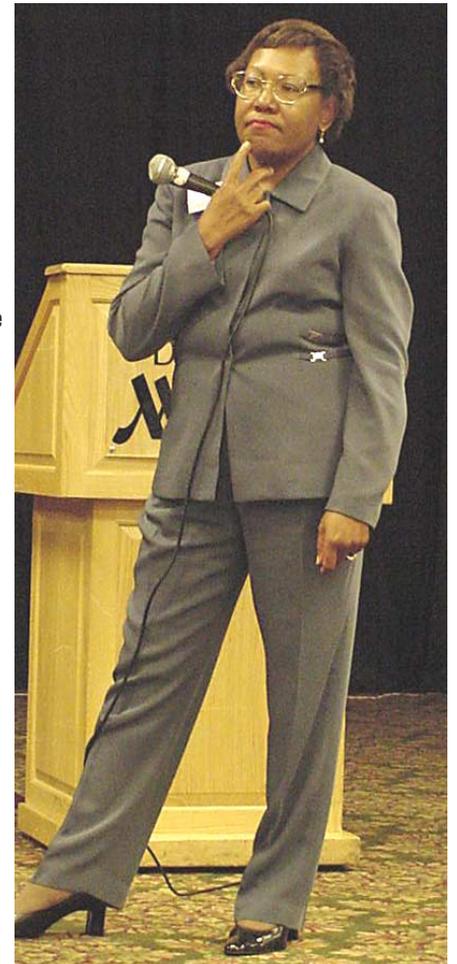
participate due to a variety of reasons. The morning’s events deeply affected all of us. The conference opened in a moment of silent prayer for everyone affected by this tragedy, the survivors, rescuers, victims, our government leaders, and heartfelt sympathies for those whose lives would be personally touched by these coordinated acts of terrorism.

While most of us were glued to our television sets the evening of the Sept. 11, Joseph Sperty, a procurement system reviewer under contract with FTA, was exploring his options to get to Des Moines after being stranded in Chicago, Ill.

Conference, see next page



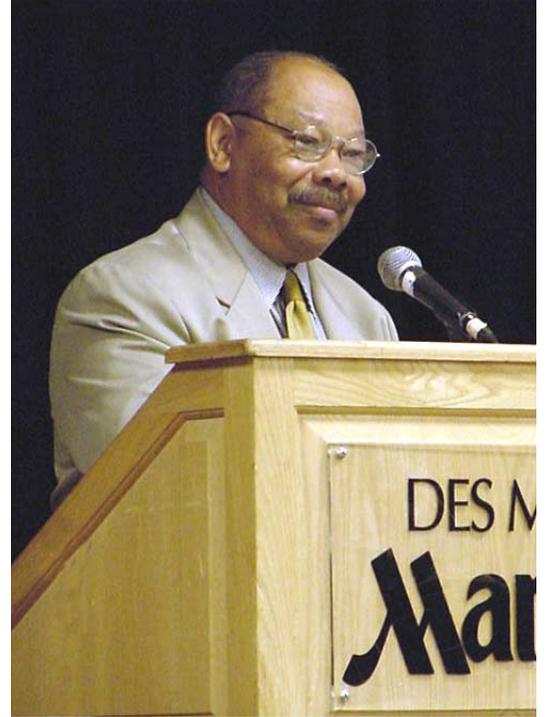
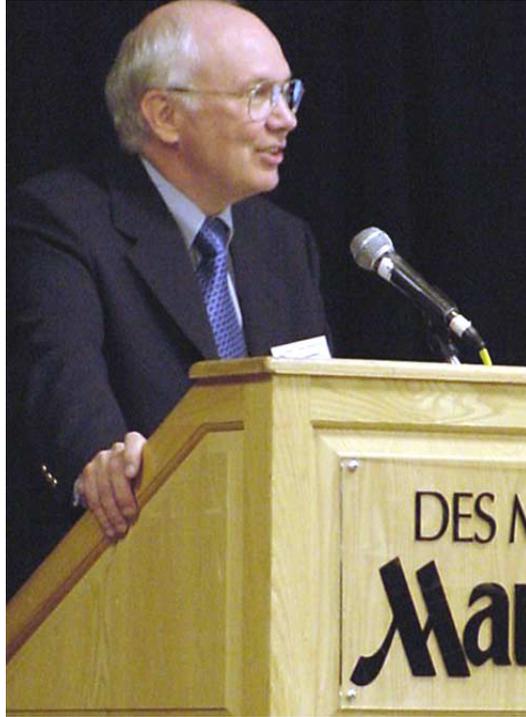
(Above) Dorrie Aldrich, FTA Associate Administrator, keynote speaker (Below) Lucy Jackson, Director, FTA’s Office of Procurement, listens attentively to questions.



Leah Russell, (standing) FTA Region VII, moderates question and answer session of panel of procurement specialists (left to right) Bill Kalt, FTA Region VII; Lucy Jackson, FTA, Washington, D.C.; Jim Burns, Region XII Council of Governments; and J.P. Golinvaux, Office of Public Transit

Conference, from previous page

With no hotel rooms or rental cars available, many people found themselves in this same situation. Sperty shared with us that he had met another gentleman that was kind enough to offer him a ride to Des Moines for our conference. With no rental cars available and stranded at the airport, you might be asking yourself, where did he get the car? This stranger had gone directly to a local car dealership and purchased a new car to get to his own destination. In doing so, he offered Sperty a ride to Des Moines, and the two had several hours to get to know each other and become friends. Upon his arrival, he found that cancelled flights didn't keep Jones from the conference either. He had driven a motorhome up from Texas to be here. Sperty discussed recordkeeping and provided participants with tips regarding policies and procedures. The session ended with an opportunity for participants to ask questions to a panel of procurement specialists including Jim Burns, Region XII Council of Governments, Carroll, Iowa, and J.P. Golinvaux, Iowa Department of Transportation, Office of Public Transit, along with Lucy Jackson, and William (Bill) Kalt, FTA Region VII, Kansas City. Leah Russell moderated the question-and-answer session.



(Counter clockwise from top right) William Jones, FTA Region VI, discusses DBE initiatives. Joseph Sperty, FTA Contractor, shares his story prior to expertise on recordkeeping and other tips. Reginald Lovelace, FTA, Washington, D.C., explains recent changes in federal procurement rules. Reginald Lovelace, served as the conference facilitator.



TEAM-Web and environmental justice training offered in Ames



Shannon Graves provides student assistance in navigating TEAM-Web.

By Donna Johnson

To take advantage of the power and flexibility of the Internet, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) introduced TEAM-Web around the country. Transportation Electronic Award and Management System (TEAM) was changed from a client/server application that must be installed on every user's computer to a Web-enabled application that sits entirely on FTA's servers. Users can now work from most anywhere that has Internet access. As of October 1, 2001, this program will be used by the Iowa Department of Transportation, as well as all other direct grantees of federal transit funds.

FTA held training sessions around the country to assist current users in their transition from TEAM 5.1 to the new Web-based TEAM program. Training for Region VII (Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas) was offered in Kansas City, Mo. on Aug. 30 and 31. In an effort to accommodate several TEAM users from Iowa, Shannon Graves, FTA Region VII program manager, conducted two additional training sessions in Ames, Sept. 5 and 6. About 20 new or experienced TEAM 5.1 users were able to take advantage of the training offered at Iowa DOT's new computer lab in Ames. Our thanks to Mohktee Ahmad, FTA's Region VII Administrator, for offering his expert staff to provide on-site training here in Ames.

Aug. 30, 2001, Iowa DOT hosted a National Highway Institute training course on Environmental Justice. Mary McDonough-Bradd, Federal Highway (FHWA) Midwest Resource Center and Cindy Durrenberger, FHWA Michigan Division were the instructors. The course covered Environmental Justice applications, how it fits with Title VI, Goals and Methods of Environmental Justice; role of federal agencies, state DOT's, Metropolitan Planning Organizations and transit operators. Project development, and tools and resources were also covered. Participants in this course took a brief look at a few case studies.

Compliance Review, from page 3

above. In cases where the transit system brokers operations through multiple subcontractors, the process will be more involved since separate meetings with subcontractors will likely be needed.

This process will continue to evolve as we go. It seems that new regulations continue to come up, and the interpretation and emphasis placed on existing rules changes with time. Hopefully this procedure will help Iowa's systems to be aware of the various rules, regulations and policies and to stay in compliance as time goes on.

Economic downturn, from page 4

Donations and grants from other agencies – In some instances, STA funds are used as match money for grants and contracts from other sources. The effect of STA reductions may be doubled if other funding sources decrease at the same level.

Impact on transit services

Transit operational costs have increased at the same time funding is decreasing. Transit agencies have found it necessary to cut some services, reduce hours, raise fares and cut personnel. Transit services for transportation-dependent Iowans will be significantly impacted.

River Bend Transit helps with transportation hurdle

By Donna Johnson

Finding dependable, affordable transportation can be a huge hurdle for people trying to work their way from welfare to financial independence. The Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) program, administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation, is helping to eliminate the problems of transportation for some people who don't own vehicles, can't find a ride during irregular work hours, and can't conveniently pick up their children from day care. The JARC program is attempting to eliminate barriers to successful employment with convenient, affordable access to jobs.

River Bend Transit (RBT), based in Davenport, is playing a vital role in helping with work and work-related journeys through JARC funding, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) from the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services, and local dollars. Randy Zobrist, RBT's executive director said, "We handle the program for Scott County and have seen it grow immensely. Since its inception in November 1999, service has grown from just 11 trips our first week to providing over 1,900 rides per month."



Curb-to-curb bus service help parents to keep their jobs, plus their children ages 12 and under are dropped off and picked up at a baby sitter's house, relative, or day-care center at no additional charge. The fare charged by RBT is 50 cents for a one-way trip. That's just one dollar to take workers from where they live to where they work, and back again at the end of their shift. The JARC program is available to county residents who receive TANF funding and have a regular or variable, scheduled job or training, and to county residents who qualify under federal guidelines as low income and referred to RBT by a health and human service agency. RBT has more than 20 collaborative partners helping coordinate the JARC program.

"The ability to access transportation for work and work-related needs is essential for survival," said Steve Swisher, RBT JARC program coordinator. "What may be an inconvenience for some, is life threatening for others who don't have access to reliable and affordable transportation," he added. Swisher talks to all JARC applicants personally and works closely with their job counselors and the Department of Human Services.

JARC's transportation service is provided seven days a week, including holidays. Service hours are 6 a.m. to 1 a.m., Monday through Friday, and 6 p.m. to midnight on Saturday. On Sunday, the hours are split from 6 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 11 p.m.

RBT vehicles provide curb-to-curb transportation service.

Iowa's first Certified Community Transit Supervisor

By J.P. Golinvaux

The Community Transportation Association of America's (CTAA) EXPO 2001, held May 20-25, 2001, in Salt Lake City, Utah, had a special significance for one of the participants. Monica Roderick, system administrator for the Northeast Iowa Area Community Action Transit (NEICAT) agency, based in Decorah,

became the first person in Iowa to be recognized by CTAA and her peers as a certified community transit supervisor (CCTS). This professional certification program was developed by CTAA to improve the recognition and expertise of persons who supervise local community transit operations.

"Try Transit Week"

By Donna Johnson

"Try Transit Week" was developed by the American Public Transit Association (APTA) to educate communities about public transit and the benefit it provides. Transit systems across Iowa promoted this week to consumers and honored their drivers in various ways. "Try Transit Week" was celebrated by Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) Sept. 10-14 throughout our service area" said Jeanette Scoles, HIRTA executive director. HIRTA, based in Des Moines, provides dial-a-ride and contracted services in the counties of Boone, Dallas, Jasper, Madison, Marion, Story and Warren. Riders in Warren County were given HIRTA "ride the bus" pencils and "try transit" magnets identifying their agency name and telephone number. Drawings for free ride tickets and flashlights were also held as part of their customer appreciation activities. Drivers were given badges and treats in appreciation of their services. Special advertising was placed throughout Dallas County in an effort to reach even more potential customers. Handouts and promotional pencils were provided thanking past riders and informing new riders about the services offered. Dallas County Supervisor Alice Wicker also took a ride on the bus.

Five Seasons Transportation and Parking (FST&P) offered free rides Sept. 10 to kick off "Try Transit Week" in the city of Cedar Rapids. "Around 500 additional rides were provided on that day in comparison to the two Monday's prior," said Dave Gosch, FST&P marketing manager. New riders were able to see firsthand how convenient it is to use public transit. FST&P thanked its current riders too by offering free popcorn at the Ground Transportation Center. "Over 300 bags of popcorn were given away," said Gosch.



Monica Roderick

Monica has more than 20 years of experience in coordinating, dispatching and supervising the operations of NEICAT. Under her supervision, NEICAT's 35 plus drivers have achieved a remarkable degree of rapport with the clients of human service agencies throughout the five counties NEICAT serves in northeast Iowa—Howard, Winneshlek, Allamakee, Fayette and Clayton. Earl Henry, the transit manager for NEICAT, encouraged Monica to seek CTAA's certification for transit supervisors in part because of her enthusiasm for acquiring new skills and ideas for improving customer service. He was especially proud to learn that Monica has

now been welcomed into the ranks of 150 other CCTS to be certified by CTAA throughout North America.

For managers and supervisors of Iowa's other 15 regional transit systems it will come as no surprise that NEICAT has had someone with exceptional supervisory skills assisting Earl Henry and his predecessors Marion Peter and Catherine Irons. Earl may even remember his remark that "...without Monica, NEICAT wouldn't have even been among the top contenders, much less attain recognition as Iowa's most improved regional transit system in both 1999 and 1997." It is with great pride the Iowa Department of Transportation extends its congratulations to Monica for her years of effective and frugal transit service coordination, as well as her recent certification as a CCTS. We hope the fellowship program the Office of Public Transit administers will assist other Iowa transit supervisors to seek the training necessary to follow in Monica's footsteps.

For more information about CTAA's certified community transit supervisor certification program, check out its Web site at www.ctaa.org.

2001

December

Dec. 11: FTA Drug and Alcohol Testing Workshop, Federal Transit Administration/Iowa DOT, Des Moines, Iowa (Donna Johnson, 515-233-7875)

2002

February

Feb. 19-21: TransiTech 2002, Orlando, FL, American Public Transportation Association Trans/Tech Information Technology Conference (www.apta.com)

Feb. 27: Iowa Public Transit Legislative Day, Iowa Public Transit Association, Des Moines, Iowa (Bev Thomas, 515-440-6057)

March

March 10-13: Legislative Conference, American Public Transportation Association, Washington, D.C. (202-496-4800)

April

April 1-4: Managing and Planning for Rural and Small Urban Systems, Center for Transportation Education and Development-University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wis. (414-227-3190)

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>

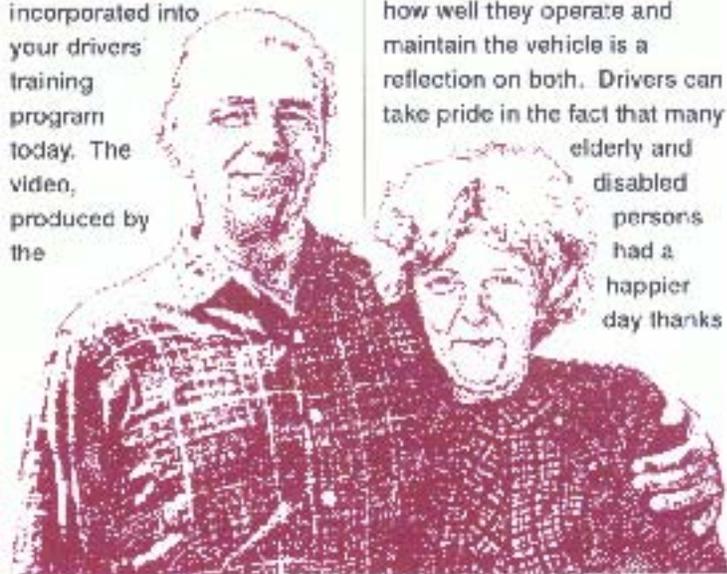
Transit training library

Feature video "A Most Precious Cargo"

A short video that dates back to 1984 still has many important features that can be incorporated into your drivers' training program today. The video, produced by the

Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, emphasizes the vital and important role public transit drivers have in the lives of elderly and disabled persons. Drivers are reminded that a thorough inspection of the vehicle prior to use is necessary to make sure the vehicle can safely transport our "most precious cargo," human life.

to be cognizant of their representation of themselves and their organization; and how well they operate and maintain the vehicle is a reflection on both. Drivers can take pride in the fact that many elderly and disabled persons had a happier day thanks



Wisconsin Council on Developmental Disabilities, emphasizes the vital and important role public transit drivers have in the lives of elderly and disabled persons. Drivers are reminded that a thorough inspection of the vehicle prior to use is necessary to make sure the vehicle can safely transport our "most precious cargo," human life.

Transit agencies provide a valuable service to their communities. By providing this transportation service, more people have the ability to access every day opportunities. Drivers are encouraged

to the service they personally provide.

Funding for this 10-minute video was provided by the University of Wisconsin. 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 to obtain a complete listing of available training materials, call Kay Williams, Office of Public Transit, at 515-239-1875, or e-mail your request to kay.williams@dot.state.ia.us.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Due to recent budget cuts in state government, the Office of Public Transit will no longer be printing the CONNECTIONS newsletter in a paper format. However, we will continue to produce the newsletter and send it out via e-mail. To continue receiving this newsletter, please send your e-mail address to Kay Williams, Secretary, Office of Public Transit. Kay's e-mail address is kay.williams@dot.state.ia.us.

Kay can also be reached by telephone at 515-239-1875. Past and current issues of the CONNECTIONS newsletter can also be accessed via our updated Web site at iatransit.com.

CONNECTIONS

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