



CONNECTIONS

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Regional transit leads the way with first statewide deployment of AVL GPS

Something exciting is happening in Iowa regional transit, and Dec. 9, 2004, marked its first physical presence. That was the first day of deployment for “Go-Live” Phase One for the River Bend Transit (RBT - Region 9) Intelligent Transportation System (ITS).

The event was well attended by local officials and received superb media coverage. It will be followed by deployment of two more “Go-Live” Phase One systems: for Rides (Region 3), headquartered in Spencer, and Southern Iowa Trolley (Region 14), based in Creston.

Some would say, “Oh, this is just another automated computer scheduling/dispatching package - they’ve been around for years.” True. However, the RBT “Go-Live” deployment marked the first step toward statewide implementation of Automated Vehicle Locator (AVL) Global Positioning System (GPS) in the Iowa public sector.

Actual AVL/GPS installation begins this spring after the

complete software system has “gone live” in all participating transit systems. That’s right! Regional transit will lead the way - at least on a statewide basis. There could be other applications for use by county sheriffs, emergency medical services personnel, the Iowa Department of Transportation’s Highway Division or the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Deployment will be in two phases: a software deployment and the actual AVL/GPS deployment. The software deployment involves several elements:

- First, there is computer acquisition and upgrades to support new software. (The upgrades will be provided by RouteMatch Software of Atlanta.)
- Then comes software installation. The software package has five basic modules - one each for scheduling, dispatching, trip verification, invoicing and reporting. The RBT dispatchers indicated that

AVL GPS, see page 14

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Director's Column

By Michelle McEnany

I am pleased to announce that we have selected a new administrative support person. Lynn Zook joined the Iowa Department of Transportation's offices of Public Transit and Aviation on Dec. 15, 2004. Lynn comes to us all the way from Arizona. She originally lived in McCallsburg, Iowa, and also Sioux City, Iowa.

Everyone asks her why she moved to Iowa from warm, sunny Arizona. Lynn says, "My family here in Iowa is what brought me back - which includes my mom, step-dad, little sister, brother, sister-in-law, two nephews ages six and ten, two sets of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins." She has a seven-year-old daughter who also keeps her pretty busy. We are glad to have Lynn on board and anxious to have her learn about public transit and aviation here in Iowa. Feel free to call and introduce yourself to Lynn as she gets acclimated to the role of administrative support.

Update on STA Formula Review

At the November IPTA meeting I announced that we had decided we were not ready to propose a change to the State Transit Assistance

(STA) formula in time to be used for next year's funding distribution.

At the Iowa Public Transit Association meeting in late September I received input from the assembled transit system representatives concerning the proposal that was on the table at that time. Based on that input, Office of Public Transit staff looked at several additional variations on the new STA formula. The variants included the possibilities of working with four peer groups rather than three and incorporating some degree of individual system adjustments for federal funding, rather than a peer group adjustment only. In the end, we decided the advisory committee should be consulted further before considering any changes that had not been discussed with them.

We've now provided all systems with projections for FY 2006 based on a continuation of the current formula. In January we will meet again with the STA Formula Review Committee to discuss further options which, if adopted, would go into effect for FY 2007.

Best wishes for the New Year!



Des Moines MTA wins AdWheel grand prize

The Des Moines MTA was awarded an AdWheel Grand Prize for its Stress-Free Commute Week promotion at the 25th annual American Public Transportation Association (APTA) AdWheel Awards Ceremony in Atlanta, Ga., on Oct. 11, 2004. Michelle McEnany, director of the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit, said, "APTA's awards program recognizes excellence in the public transportation industry and we are pleased that an Iowa transit system is the recipient of this award. This is just one more way that Iowa is taking a proactive approach toward enhancing the image of public transit and getting everyone on-board with transit."

MTA's Director of Special Projects, Brian Litchfield, accepted the award for the Stress-Free Commute Week promotion, which was entered in the Special Event, Promotion category. When asked about the success of the promotion held last May 10-14, Steve Spade, MTA general manager, said, "The five days of special events planned for that week generated a lot of attention for public transportation. I am sure the exposure will translate into a better understanding of public transportation and the advantages it brings to the community."

The promotion, developed by MTA and Transportation Management Association staff, utilized multiple media to meet a diverse set of objectives, including increasing the public's overall awareness of the services provided by MTA. The promotion strengthened MTA's relationship with downtown employers, provided better access for business commuters, and also enhanced the level of support for public transit issues among key decision-makers by increasing awareness of the benefits of public transportation.

The AdWheel Awards honor APTA member organizations for excellence in their advertising, marketing, promotion and communications efforts, recognizing innovation as well as outstanding achievement by transit systems. Nearly 750 entries were submitted this year. Grand prize award winners were selected from first-place winners for each of the four main categories: print, electronic media, campaign, and special event for each of the five entry groups. Selections are made by a panel of independent judges.

A vehicle destined for the junkyard makes transit history

Back in 1984 the city of Ames transit provider, CyRide, purchased a vehicle called a “Dutcher Parataxi.” Acclaimed as the first of its kind, it featured a unique method of serving people with disabilities. At the time, public buses were outfitted with complex lift mechanisms to serve this purpose. The low-floor, van-like Dutcher Parataxi was envisioned by Mr. Cornelius Dutcher, a Canadian investor who wanted to fill a special niche in the automotive marketplace: a need for an accessible successor to the Checker Cab. Mr. Dutcher anticipated the need for boarding and alighting from a minivan-size vehicle via a ramp. Uniquely, the Dutcher is accessible from either its left or right side, via a ramp stowed on a roll-out mechanism under its floor.

Purchased with federal funds, this vehicle was later transferred to Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency in Des Moines for its rural dial-a-ride service. In 1990, Five Seasons Parking and Transportation (FST&P) Director Bill Hoekstra requested the Dutcher be transferred to Cedar Rapids, where it was used until 1999 when parts and technical support became difficult to find. “The Dutcher Parataxi was a great idea because the pull-out ramp and low floor made it easy to accommodate persons with wheelchairs,” said Hoekstra.

This vehicle has a unique connection to the civil rights issues addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Moreover, it is a tangible piece of history in the home state of Senator Tom Harkin, who has played a major national role in advocating for the disabled. The Dutcher Parataxi was the only vehicle of its kind ever to be used in Iowa – and it may well be the only remaining example.

So where is the Dutcher now? After many months of looking for the perfect home for this bit of Iowa’s history, FST&P received approval to donate the van to the future Iowa Transportation Museum in Grinnell. How fitting that one of the very first vehicles to come off the assembly line of Dutcher Motors, Inc. of Hagerstown, Md., will be on display at a former car assembly plant.

A 20-year-old vehicle may not seem old enough today to be featured in a museum, but in light of the major strides in providing public transit services for persons with disabilities, this vehicle definitely has historic value. The museum is still a few years from opening, according to John Swanson of Cedar Rapids, executive director of the emerging facility. The museum will eventually spread over 125,000 square feet of space in the now-vacant buildings of the former Spaulding Manufacturing Company.



(Top) Dutcher paint scheme at time of transfer of ownership from City of Cedar Rapids to the Iowa Transportation Museum.

(Above) Dutcher Parataxi being used for passenger assistance training at Iowa DOT circa 1986.

Bus operators receive recognition and awards

The Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA) presented Professional Driver awards to 17 bus operators from around the state at an awards ceremony June 4, 2004, in Cedar Falls. As part of the IPTA/Iowa Department of Transportation annual bus rodeo, a banquet was held to honor bus operators who had been nominated to receive this special recognition. To qualify, a driver's record must contain no documented incidents or complaints, and no at-fault accidents or moving violations.

Pam Ward, IPTA president, congratulated each of the winners as she recognized them for their accomplishments, and for winning the IPTA award. A certificate and lapel pin was given to each of the winners as a way of thanking them for their professionalism in providing public transit service. Awards were given to the following individuals:

- **Derrick Kraus**, University of Iowa – CAMBUS, Iowa City
- **Bill Devereaux**, Clinton Municipal Transit Administration
- **John Fox**, City of Fort Dodge - Dodger Area Rapid Transit
- **Jean Dalsing**, Region 8 – Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority (RTA), based in Dubuque
- **Linda Campidilli**,

HomeCare Services, providing service on behalf of Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency, based in Des Moines

- **Lon Kammeyer**, Black Hawk County Metro Transit Authority, Waterloo
- **Jolene and Joe Hagarty**, Charles City Transit, providing service on behalf of North Iowa Area Regional Transit System – Region 2, based in Mason City
- **Evert Hart**, Ottumwa Transit Authority (fixed route service)
- **Jim Handling**, Ottumwa Transit Authority (paratransit service)
- **Rodney Robinson**, 10-15 Regional Transit Agency, based in Ottumwa
- **Eileen Shockey Moss**, Mid-Iowa Development Association, based in Fort Dodge
- **Sherry Andrews**, Southeast Iowa Regional Transit Authority, based in Burlington
- **Thomas “Tommy” Farren**, River Bend Transit, based in Davenport
- **Howard Barrett**, Sioux City Transit
- **Robert Bak**, Siouxland Regional Transit System, based in Sioux City
- **Harlan Meyer**, Western Iowa Transit System, based in Carroll
- **Dale Barnes, Sr.**, Area XIV Agency on Aging – Southern Iowa Trolley, based in Creston

FTA presents special recognition awards

Eight of Iowa's public transit systems and one Iowa Department of Transportation Office of Public Transit (OPT) staff member were presented with awards in June 2004. Mohktee Ahmad, Regional Administrator of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Region 7 based in Kansas City, Mo., presented the following awards during the annual meeting of the Iowa Public Transit Association in Cedar Falls:

Award of Excellence

CyRide, city of Ames, received this award for the highest percentage increase in ridership and smallest number of open grants in Iowa in 2002/2003. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2003, CyRide posted a 36.88 percent increase in ridership.

Ridership Awards

The city of Clinton received an award for the highest percentage increase in ridership among the small urban transit systems in Iowa in 2002/2003.

North Iowa Area Regional Transit System - Region 2 was recognized for the highest percentage increase in ridership among the rural transit systems in Iowa in 2002/2003. Region 2 serves the counties of Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth.

Special Achievement Awards

University of Iowa/CAMBUS was recognized for an increase in ridership and lowest number of triennial review findings. Iowa City Transit; Coralville Transit System; 10-15 Regional Transit Agency (RTA); and Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority - Region 8 each were cited for an increase in ridership. 10-15 RTA serves Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Van Buren, Wapello, Wayne, and Lee counties.

Certificate of Appreciation

Donna Johnson, OPT program manager, was singled out for her dedication, commitment and prompt service to the FTA Region 7 office.

Iowa bus operator receives national recognition for driving skills

Paul Klimesh, a bus operator for the city of Ames transit system, CyRide, claimed second place in the 29th International "Bus Roadeo" held in conjunction with the American Public Transportation Association's (APTA) annual meeting in Atlanta, Ga. The winners of this prestigious competition were announced at an awards dinner Oct. 10, 2004.

The International Roadeo is designed to encourage excellence and professionalism in bus transit operations. A total of 114 teams, comprised of more than 260 competitors from North America's finest bus transit systems, participated. The APTA Operators' Competition measures professional skills, including driving ability as measured on an obstacle course, knowledge of safety regulations, bus equipment and personal appearance.

Top honor in the 35-foot class Bus Operator Competition went to Jimmy Gibbs of the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA). Competition was very close between first and second place. Klimesh's score was just nine points shy of Gibbs' score of 605, yet forty points more than the third place competitor.



Paul Klimesh with 2nd Place award plaque from APTA.

To qualify for the national competition, Klimesh first had to take first place in the 18th Annual Public Transit Roadeo held in Cedar Falls last June. His win in the large bus division gave Klimesh the opportunity to compete at the national level with a state-sponsored transit fellowship.

Mark Wandro, Director of the Iowa DOT, said, "Iowa's transit systems do an excellent job in driver training and helping them enhance their professional skills to provide safe and efficient public transportation. We are very pleased with Paul's performance at the national bus roadeo. He has represented Iowa well at the national competition."

Ward honored with Roger Tate award

Pam Ward, transit administrator for both the Ottumwa Transit Authority and 10-15 Regional Transit Agency, was awarded the "Roger Tate Is Smiling" Award at the 16th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference held in Roanoke, Va., Oct. 26, 2004. Presenting the award was Beth Denniston, National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) executive director, representing the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Rural Public and Intercity Bus committee.

Ward's nomination noted her efforts on local and state-level issues and with helping to guide the future of the public transit industry. Her willingness to help colleagues, newcomers and people throughout her community ensure mobility improvements was also honored.

Ward has done considerable committee work, including playing a key role in organizing national conferences. In addition, as a charter member of the RTAP national review board, she chaired that organization for four years. She has served on several panels and worked with leaders in the human services area to promote coordination and intra-agency relationships. While highlighting the need for expanded funding, improved efficiencies and better recognition of rural



Pam Ward, Transit Administrator for Ottumwa Transit Authority and 10-15 Regional Transit.

transit services, she has actively been speaking out to advance the cause of rural public transportation. Acknowledging Ward for this honor helps to recognize the professional contributions and needs of real people who rely on, and deliver, daily mobility services throughout rural America.

The award was established in honor of Roger Tate who was director of the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Research Management in the early 1990s. Tate is considered both a pioneer for, and founder of, the National Rural Transit Assistance Program and Coordinating Council on Access and Mobility. The focus of this award is to recognize a person in rural transportation who has given many people reason to smile and has improved the future of the rural transit program.



Donna Johnson is Talking Transit

As I look back over the past year, transit has come a long way. We've seen funding at both the state and federal level starting to increase, the reinstatement of some services that had previously been cut, and the start-up of some new services under the Job Access Reverse Commute federal funding program. We've also seen inter-city bus routes abandoned and then quickly reestablished by other carriers in order to preserve continuity of service in rural areas. Iowa transit managers and staff have received numerous state, regional and national awards this past year (see articles this newsletter).

Training has been made available to transit system staff, and marketing efforts have increased dramatically. New training opportunities will soon be available, such as one coming up this April to help educate transit staff in complying with the Federal Transit Administration's Policy on Intelligent Transportation System Architecture Consistency.

For the new year, our wish is that you achieve all you did in 2004, and more. We are looking forward to another great year with our partners in public transit and those of you that provide support and advocacy for the program. Happy New Year!

Nearly \$1 million awarded to maintain intercity bus service

The Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit has awarded nearly \$1 million in federal funding to maintain the viability of Iowa's intercity bus service.

This multifaceted program helps preserve existing intercity bus routes that tie smaller communities in Iowa to the nationwide intercity bus system, and assists in starting new routes to serve rural communities that do not have services. Funding is also available to provide upgraded equipment and facilities, including adding accessibility features required by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Three of the projects being funded involve carriers starting new routes to pick up services that Greyhound Lines discontinued last August. Included in the program are the Iowa portion of Burlington Trailways

new services between Cedar Rapids and Indianapolis via Mount Pleasant and Burlington, and between Des Moines and Chicago via Marshalltown, Cedar Rapids, Waterloo and Dubuque. Jefferson Lines will be funded for the Iowa portion of their new service between Kansas City and Sioux Falls via Clarinda, Shenandoah, Emerson, Council Bluffs, Onawa and Sioux City.

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

For a complete list of projects funded for calendar year 2005 and a map showing intercity bus service in Iowa, visit our Web site, iatransit.com.

Marketing items now available online

In a continuing effort to automate transit services we have developed an online marketing system. This system will be available to the general public and transit system managers sometime in January. Access to the system will be through the Office of Public Transit's (OPT) Web site, www.iatransit.com.

Individuals will be able to see photos of the items they are ordering, enter the number of items requested, and provide their contact information all online. Once an order is placed, the OPT secretary is notified. She can batch-process mailing labels and packaging slips for the items. This new system will streamline the process and make ordering marketing items easier for everyone.

Increase in federal funding will help Iowa transit systems

The 108th Congress adjourned without reauthorizing the federal highway or transit programs. Although each house of Congress passed its own version of a reauthorization bill, their inability to come to agreement on an overall funding level leaves us depending on another short-term extension of the previous bill that was originally supposed to expire in September 2003. The incoming Congress will have until May 30 to generate a new bill, get it passed by both houses, and signed by the President, or they will need to pass yet another extension.

On the appropriations side, we do now have an FY 2005 appropriation, though it didn't get passed until we were already into the third month of

the new fiscal year and ended up having to be rolled into an Omnibus Act covering appropriations for almost all domestic programs. Transit came out fairly well, considering that leadership characterized the overall bill as having the smallest annual spending increases in a decade. The total appropriation for public transit is up 5.2 percent, even after the across-the-board rollback that was included in the legislation. Transit formula programs saw a 4.8 percent increase, with even greater increases for the discretionary transit funding programs, which tend to be earmarked by Congress.

Iowa will see a part of that discretionary funding. Congressional earmarks within the appropriations bill included approximately \$5 million for

statewide bus replacement in Iowa, approximately \$2 million for the Des Moines MTA to buy buses that are currently leased, approximately \$1 million for expansion of Ames transit's maintenance facility, approximately \$3 million towards an intermodal facility at the University of Northern Iowa, and approximately \$2 million for statewide job access transportation projects.

The increase in formula funding will also benefit Iowa programs. It is anticipated that Iowa's small urban and regional transit systems will see a total increase of about \$234,395. The transit systems serving urbanized areas with 50,000-200,000 populations should see an aggregate increase of about \$306,680, and the Omaha-Council Bluffs, Des Moines and Quad Cities

areas will see about \$676,355 in additional funds, though some of this is attributable to the non-Iowa portions of the two interstate areas.

Unless a new authorization bill is passed quickly in the new year, we will again face a pattern of partial grant approvals over the next few months, since the Federal Transit Administration is not allowed to obligate any more of the appropriated funds than are covered by the current authorization extension, or about 2/3 (eight months authorized out of the year).

Hopefully by our next issue, some of this will be resolved and we will be into a new multi-year authorization, but that is yet to be seen. We will keep you updated.

Iowa DOT receives United We Ride grant

The Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) has been awarded a \$30,000 "United We Ride" grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration. It will be used to further the state's efforts to coordinate publicly funded passenger transportation services, which help meet the needs of Iowa's transportation-disadvantaged population.

Michelle McEnany, director of the Iowa DOT's Office of Public Transit, announced receipt of the grant at the December meeting of the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council. McEnany said, "This

grant will help Iowa coordinate services for those that need it most - older adults, persons with disabilities across the lifespan, and individuals and families with lower incomes." She explained that the grant is part of a federal campaign to promote coordination of passenger services across various human service programs with public transit.

Iowa has already achieved national recognition for its successful public transit coordination efforts. Setting the stage for that success was legislation passed several years ago requiring various state and federally funded

human service transportation agencies to coordinate their services with the designated public transit system in their area. Most Iowa transit systems already provide a great deal of contracted transportation for local human service agencies.

"This grant will help promote the benefits of coordinated passenger service and explore additional opportunities to strengthen the level of coordination amongst agencies and the public," said McEnany.

The department will work closely with the Iowa Transportation Coordination Council in

implementing this project. The council is comprised of representatives from six state agencies that administer funding used for passenger transportation services - Transportation, Human Services, Elder Affairs, Education, Public Health, and Workforce Development - plus the Iowa State Association of Counties and the Iowa League of Cities.

Ready to share your ride? MTA launches real-time, on line carpool/vanpool matching

Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) Central Iowa Rideshare, in cooperation with the Transportation Management Association (TMA), recently launched a Web-based, on line ride matching service that allows commuters to locate potential carpool and vanpool partners instantly. The new service is a valuable, free tool for central Iowa residents interested in saving money and time and reducing the stress caused by commuting alone.

Interested commuters simply log on to www.dmmta.com/rideshare and create a password-protected account by filling in home and work address information and work hours. The next step is to run a carpool or vanpool match. The database will quickly return a list of available partners who live and work near the commuter, and who share a similar schedule. It is up to the user to set up his or her carpool. Rideshare staff will assist with vanpool matches and in setting up free trial rides. The on line database can also be accessed via www.avoidtherush.org/commuters/carpool.asp.

If there is no initial match, the user can alter information regarding work hours or other parameters to widen the search. It's possible to check

back at any time for an update, and to update information. All on line information is secure. "MTA has offered vanpool and carpool services through Central Iowa Rideshare since 1995, so we're excited to have this additional tool. Now commuters can register any time, day or night, and in just a few seconds find other commuters with similar schedules who live and work near them. The service will help more commuters get into carpools and vanpools faster and easier than ever," said Steve Spade, General Manager for MTA.

Both the MTA and TMA say there are many benefits to an Internet ride-matching program:

- Commuters can instantly find rideshare partners anytime, anywhere they have access to the Internet.
- Commuters can update or delete their records, change work schedules or pick-up/drop-off locations, and find new matches whenever they want.
- Maps show the general area where their matches live, so users can choose for themselves whether or not someone lives close enough to share a ride.
- More than 65 public vanpool groups are available in the database to match with others who have a similar commute.

- Information regarding current construction projects, MTA bus routes, park-and-ride lots, and childcare services is also available.
- Users can call or email any or all of their matches directly within the program, making it easy and quick to turn a match-list into a carpool or vanpool.
- Automated database maintenance programs ensure all match-lists are current and accurate.

"If commuters share a ride with just one person, they can cut commuting costs in half," said Amanda Carstens Steward, Director of the TMA. In fact, the TMA estimates ridesharing can save commuters an average of \$600 to \$1,200 every year. Individuals can calculate the cost of their commute by visiting the commuter calculator at www.avoidtherush.org.

Commuters who do not have Internet access can call 515-288-RIDE (7433) to reach a Rideshare Associate who will take commute information over the phone, enter it into the database and help locate potential ridematch partners. Paper registrations will also be processed.

MTA is the public transit authority that serves the greater Des Moines area including the communities of Altoona, Ankeny, Clive, Des Moines, Urbandale, West Des Moines and Windsor Heights. MTA services include fixed-route buses, express and commuter buses, shuttles, paratransit and the Central Iowa RideShare vanpool and carpool program.

The TMA is a non-profit organization comprised of private and public agencies dedicated to achieving reductions in traffic congestion, improving mobility and air quality, educating employers and their employees about transportation alternatives and reducing construction's impact on commuters throughout the region.

This article is courtesy of the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the Des Moines Metropolitan Transit Authority, and the Transportation Management Association.

Iowa transit roadeo winners

On June 5, 2004, the Iowa Department of Transportation and the Iowa Public Transit Association jointly sponsored the 18th Annual Public Transit Bus Roadeo held in Cedar Falls at the University of Northern Iowa. The competition took place in the parking lot at the UNI Dome. Black Hawk County Metro Transit Authority (MTA) based in Waterloo, and Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission (RTA), a six-county regional transit system also based in Waterloo, co-hosted this year's event with funding under a Federal Transit Administration training program.

The roadeo's purpose is to promote and provide recognition for safe driving skills by Iowa's public transit vehicle operators. Judging was provided by local law enforcement, transit system managers and staff, board members and a state legislator, Deborah Berry from Waterloo.

At this year's roadeo 62 operators from 20 transit systems displayed their skills. Each operator performed a series of maneuvers that represent many of the actual situations they face as they carry 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.

The top three ranking competitors for each division received a plaque and a U.S. Savings Bond. The first place winner in each division is awarded the opportunity to compete at the national level. For Dalsing and Davis, that means they will represent Iowa in the National Community Transit Roadeo sponsored by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) in conjunction with its annual meeting in St. Louis this coming May. Last October, Klimesh had an opportunity to represent Iowa at the American Public Transit Association's International Bus Operator's Roadeo conducted in conjunction with its annual meeting in Atlanta, Ga.

Jean Dalsing, representing Delaware, Dubuque, and Jackson County Regional Transit Authority (RTA) based in Dubuque, says she has placed in the top three rankings in at least one category in all but one year, since she started competing in 1995. "That year, 1998, I was nine months pregnant with my third child so competing was a little more difficult for me. Since then, I have placed first in either the van or small bus division category each year; that makes a six-year streak of wins. In 2003 I won both the small bus and van division categories. It is always tough competition each year. They are a great bunch of drivers and I've enjoyed getting to

know my peers from around the state by participating in the annual bus roadeos." Dalsing has twice ranked in the top 10 in the national competition representing Iowa.

Keyline Transit bus operator, Susan Davis, said, "This is only the second time I have competed at the statewide transit bus roadeo. The first time I competed, I took third place in the small bus division. It was a great feeling to win first place this time. Everyone did a great job in the competition. It was lots of fun but parts of the course were difficult to maneuver. I look forward to representing Iowa at the national competition next year."

This is not the first time Klimesh has ranked as a top competitor in one or more divisions. As an employee of CyRide, Klimesh has ranked first place in the large bus division competition six times and twice took first place in the small bus division. Three years ago, Klimesh placed sixth at American Public Transit Association (APTA) international competition in Philadelphia, Pa., representing Iowa. After that competition, Klimesh said that was his personal highest ranking at the national level and that he was striving to get in the top five rankings. (Read how Klimesh did in this competition in a separate article in this newsletter, page 5.)

Van Division

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

Second place - Bert Madden, Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll

Third place - Bill Devereaux, Clinton Municipal Transit Administration

Small Bus Division

First place - Susan Davis, Keyline Transit, Dubuque

Second place - Eileen Shockey Moss, Mid-Iowa Development Association, headquartered in Fort Dodge

Third place - Paul Klimesh, city of Ames, CyRide

Large Bus Division

First place - Paul Klimesh, city of Ames, CyRide

Second place - Derrick Krause, University of Iowa, CAMBUS, Iowa City

Third place - Carl Nelson, Coralville Transit

DOT honors most improved transit systems with awards

The Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit (OPT) has honored two transit systems for their accomplishments for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2003 (FY 2003).

The city of Ames transit system, CyRide, was recognized as the most improved urban transit system of the year. In the regional category for this award, North Iowa Area Regional Transit System—Region 2 (NIARTS) based in Mason City was recognized as the most improved.

The awards, announced June 3, 2004, at the Iowa Public Transit Conference in Cedar Falls, are based on a combination of ridership increases and a decrease in the cost per ride. This is the third time CyRide has received this award.

CyRide, which is headed by Transportation Director Robert Bourne, achieved a 36.8 percent gain in ridership. This helped reduce the cost per ride by over 18 percent during FY 2003. Bourne explained that CyRide's improvements were largely the result of transitioning to system-wide "fare-free" rides for Iowa State University students and increasing bus frequency on the red route (which serves west Ames) from every 20 minutes to every ten minutes. CyRide's achievement in FY 2003 is especially noteworthy since this system was also the recipient of the Most Improved Urban System of The Year Award for FY 2002.

Ridership on the Mason City-based transit system, NIARTS, posted an 8.8 percent increase. Kevin Kramer, NIARTS Transit Manager, attributes the FY 2003 gains to upgrading most of its fleet from modified vans to light-duty buses, and restructuring its fares. Brochures were also standardized throughout the eight-county service area, which has helped NIARTS attract a broader base of customers. This is the first time NIARTS has received this award. NIARTS serves the counties of Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Franklin, Hancock, Kossuth, Mitchell, Winnebago, and Worth.

Michelle McEnany, OPT's director, has also recognized three urban transit agencies that made noteworthy improvements in FY 2003: Iowa City Transit, for a 6.6 percent increase in ridership and an 11.1 percent decrease in cost per ride; Five Seasons Transportation and Parking (Cedar Rapids), for a 2.6 percent increase in ridership and 3.8 percent decrease in cost per ride; Coralville Transit, for a 2.6 percent increase in ridership while attaining a slight decrease in cost per ride.

Ottumwa-based 10-15 Regional Transit received honorary mention for its 2.9 percent ridership increase. This system serves the counties of Appanoose, Davis, Jefferson, Keokuk, Lee, Lucas, Mahaska, Monroe, Van Buren, Wapello, and Wayne.

Aging Americans, are we ready?

The coming crisis will happen over the next 20 years. The demographic makeup of the U.S. population will change dramatically between now and 2025.

A recent report by Linda Bailey of the Surface Transportation Policy Project (STPP) reveals important information gleaned from the 2001 National Household Transportation Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. The STPP report is entitled "Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options."

The report provides a snapshot of the state of older Americans and their public transportation needs. It also points to the coming public transportation crisis.

The report's main point is that as Americans get older, transportation systems need to change. The elderly rely more on alternate transportation, and current systems are not adequate to serve their needs. Transit, pedestrian, and bike options may be the only way that some of our elderly citizens can leave the house—particularly in rural areas and small communities.

The coming crisis will happen over the next 20 years. The demographic makeup of the U.S. population will change

dramatically between now and 2025. The baby boomers will be entering their 60s and 70s. In 2002, 12 percent of the U.S. population was 65 or older. By 2025, that number will increase to an estimated 18 percent of the total population. The percent of Iowa residents over the age of 65 is higher than the national numbers and is expected to be over 20 percent of the state's population.

As the American population ages, their participation in society and the economy will be greatly determined by the availability of alternative transportation.

In the report, Ms. Bailey reports the following major findings:

More than one in five (21 percent) Americans age 65 and older do not drive. Some reasons include:

- declining health, eyesight, physical or mental abilities
- concern over safety (self regulation)
- no car or no access to a car
- personal preference

More than 50 percent of non-drivers age 65 and older - or 3.6 million Americans - stay home on any given day partially because they lack transportation options. The following populations are more heavily affected:

- rural communities and sprawling suburbs

Aging Americans,
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Aging Americans,

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- households with no car
- older African-Americans, Latinos and Asian-Americans

Older non-drivers have a decreased ability to participate in the community and the economy. Compared with older drivers, older non-drivers in the United States make:

- 15 percent fewer trips to the doctor
- 59 percent fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants
- 65 percent fewer trips for social, family and religious activities

For trips outside their immediate neighborhood, public transportation is the only alternative to asking for a ride for many non-drivers. Where public transportation is available, older Americans make regular use of it. For example:

- public transportation trips by older non-drivers totaled an estimated 310 million in 2001
- older minority populations account for a significant share of these trips, with older African-Americans and Latinos more than twice as likely to use public transportation as their Caucasian counterparts

A safe and inviting walking and bicycling environment provides mobility and health benefits to many older Americans.

- More than half of older Americans make walking a regular activity, and nearly two-thirds walk a half-mile at least once a month.
- Four percent of older Americans ride a bicycle at least once a week.
- Research shows that moderate exercise, such as walking or bicycling, can contribute significantly to a healthy lifestyle.
- Improving the walking and bicycling environment is a priority for the general public.

The findings above present a picture that is important for transportation planners and policy makers. Current funding levels will not be sufficient to meet the needs of the aging population. Making alternative transportation available to elderly citizens will become increasingly important if they are to continue to participate in our society and economy.

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Maintaining the current public transportation system requires an annual capital investment of \$14.8 billion. The report indicates that to improve our public transportation system would require \$43.9 billion annually.

More livable communities have lower rates of staying home, and higher rates of public transportation use and walking among non-drivers age 65 and over.

- 61 percent of older non-drivers stay home on a given day in more spread-out areas, as compared to 43 percent in denser areas.
- More than half of older non-drivers use public transportation occasionally in denser areas, as compared to 1 in 20 in more spread-out areas.
- One in three older non-drivers walks on a given day in denser areas, as compared to 1 in 14 in more spread-out areas.

improve our public transportation system would require \$43.9 billion annually.

The conclusions and recommendations presented in the report ring true with many of the discussions taking place across the nation concerning public transportation:

- substantially increase investment in public transportation systems to expand and improve services to meet the needs of older Americans in metropolitan and rural areas
- increase funding for existing specialized transportation programs that provide mobility for older persons, such as FTA's Section 5310 program

- incorporate mobility needs of older Americans into the planning and transportation projects, services, and streets
- coordinate with land use planning
- improve coordination among human services agencies and between those agencies and public transportation agencies
- complete the streets by providing a place for safe walking and bicycling for people of all ages
- urge states to adopt federal guidelines for designing safer roads for older drivers and pedestrians
- preserve the flexibility of state and local governments to spend federal transportation funds on improving public transportation, pedestrian and bicycle paths, and other alternatives that will meet the mobility needs of older Americans
- support the "Transportation Enhancements" program, which is a major federal source of support for pedestrian and bicycle safety projects and facilities

Credit for this story goes to Linda Bailey for her report of the Surface Transportation Policy Project; Carol Cranshaw of the Louisiana Department of Transportation for the reprint of its story in its October 2004 newsletter; and J.D. Allen of the Alliance Transportation Group, Inc. To see the full report: www.transact.org

Who's Who in Iowa Transit

Welcome Ann Harrison

Ann Harrison is the new transit manager at MuscaBus. Ann has worked as transit dispatcher and dispatch coordinator for the past 20 years for MuscaBus, more recently in a part-time capacity. She started her new duties on Sept. 30, 2004.

Ann says her recently retired husband is a great help to her as she transitions from part-time to full-time work. "I am excited about the opportunity given me to serve the people of this community with all their transportation needs."

Muscataine recently purchased and took delivery of four new buses. Ann and her staff worked very hard with the vendor to resolve a number of deficiencies prior to accepting and putting these buses into service. This was quite a project to take on as one of her first major responsibilities as transit manager. "I am so pleased with the help given us by OPT staff. They have answered so many questions for me," said Harrison.

New manager orientation was provided to Ann in October by staff in the Iowa Department of Transportation's (Iowa DOT) Office of Public Transit. Staff members were pleasantly surprised to find out that Ann had actually taken the time to read most, if not all, of the handbook and had questions ready for us. There



is a lot of heavy reading in that handbook and it can overwhelm even experienced transit managers.

Ann is anxious to learn the management side of transit and is looking forward to meeting other transit managers at upcoming meetings and training opportunities.

Ann's interests are church activities, visiting her children and grandchildren, biking, jogging (slowly), playing cards, cooking and camping.

From farm boy to transit director, Jim Burns is committed to rural Iowa

Twenty years ago, Jim Burns became the Public Transit Director for Region XII

Council of Governments (COG) headquartered in Carroll. Jim has seen many changes over the past two decades and considerable growth in the transit services Region XII COG provides for a six-county region in west central Iowa. In FY 2004 the system provided 267,605 rides and traveled 1,031,766 revenue miles. "That's a lot of rides for a rural area with a population base of just under 80,000 people," said Burns.

The transit services are provided under the name Western Iowa Transit System (WITS) with 41 full- or part-time drivers. Drivers are generally the first line of contact with riders. Their professionalism is important as they represent the transit system to its customers. "You'll find caring and professional drivers when you ride a WITS bus, and safety is always a priority," said Burns.

Besides Jim, there are two other members of WITS management staff: Tom Feldman, transit manager; and Mike Rath, service manager. Together, these three handle the region's operational and maintenance duties, along with administrative assistance from Region XII COG's staff. It truly is a team process. As a smaller transit system in a rural area, you can find Jim, Tom, or Mike taking requests for rides



"You'll find caring and professional drivers when you ride a WITS bus, and safety is always a priority."

**Jim Burns,
WITS director**

or even out driving a bus in order to keep the system running smoothly.

That must be working for them, because in 1993 WITS was featured on Morgan Halgren's Iowa Public Television show, "Living in Iowa." The segment was entitled "Wish You Were Here." It featured the transit services offered to people in Iowa's smaller communities and how to access those services as a way to enhance rural Iowans' quality of life. In 1995 the Western Iowa Transit System was one of five rural public transit systems featured in the *Users' Manual for Assessing Service Delivery Systems for Rural Passenger Transportation* that was published by the Transportation Research Board.

**Jim Burns,
see next page**

Jim Burns, from page 12

Also in the early 1990s, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) board of directors and its membership saw a need for an accreditation process for transit managers. With the help of a task force, CTAA developed several tests and other criteria for transit managers to meet to become certified. Burns was the second Certified Community Transit Manager (CCTM) in Iowa and one of the first nationwide. Although CTAA's certification process is difficult, Burns said they really do gauge a person's understanding of the federal transit program and a manager's ability to apply that knowledge at the local level. Burns received his CCTM in August 1995.

One of the most time-consuming but rewarding projects Jim has ever managed is WITS administrative and maintenance facility. Region XII COG was a party to the FY 1993 Section 5309 (previously Section 3) Discretionary Grant that was awarded to the State of Iowa for buses and bus facilities. Region XII COG was able to utilize funds received through this grant to build an 11,000 sq. ft. office, storage, and maintenance facility in Carroll. The facility was designed as a central administrative facility for Region XII COG and base for WITS transit operations and fleet maintenance. They moved into the new facility in the fall of 1994.

Passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act in 1991 allowed Burns to work with the Regional Planning Authority to secure Surface Transportation Program funds to help build two transit office and storage facilities: one in Crawford County at Denison nearly five years ago, and one in Greene County at Jefferson just over a year ago.

Burns has served on the Iowa Public Transit Association's Executive Board as Legislative Chairperson, Rural Vice President (three terms), and President. He has also served on various committees, including the 1988/89 Legislative Steering Committee designed to review and recommend changes to the State Transit Assistance formula. Presently, Jim is serving as the regional representative on the steering committee for the statewide facility needs analysis project.

Some of you may have heard of the acronym "WARTS," which stands for Western Alliance of Rural Transit Systems. Burns worked with eight transit systems in western Iowa in the late 1980s to form a vehicle and liability insurance program that originated with eight members and is still in effect. He has also taken the lead in the WARTS drug and alcohol program consortium that has grown to include as many as 66 counties.

Over the course of the past 20 years Jim has also collaborated very closely with OPT staff in serving as procurement administrator for WITS and

other agencies. It is noteworthy that Jim, by volunteering to act as the administrator for a number of light duty bus procurements, has helped not only WITS but also other transit agencies attract intense price competition in each solicitation. Jim has been especially involved in efforts to improve vehicle inspections and to equip buses with innovative products that address areas where small buses needed improvement.

Jim Burns grew up on a northwest Iowa farm near Sheldon along with eight brothers and sisters. After high school he attended Iowa State University, and also took supplemental classes at Des Moines Area Community College. Jim's early work experience included working with farm and construction equipment, which brought him to Carroll as the manager of a farm equipment store in 1981.

Jim is married and has three children, one grandchild and a second on the way.

Web-based reporting system moves forward

Analysis of the quarterly and year-end Report on Transit Operations statistical data is now a lot easier thanks to new technology. This past year, the Iowa Department of Transportation's Office of Public Transit (OPT), along with all of the transit systems around the state, have been testing a Web-based system for entering quarterly statistical data. The new system allows everyone to report data in the same manner. It saves time and essentially alleviates data input errors by prompting the end-user for information, which allows for more accurate and complete reporting.

The accuracy of the statistical reporting data is very important as it is used to distribute state and federal funding. After a year of testing the system, we are now ready to fully implement it and make it the required submittal format.

Another new technology item that is in the works is the database development of our statewide inventory. Currently, about 90 percent of the information has been loaded into the Oracle database, and we are in the process of analyzing the accuracy of the information that was loaded.

"Once the Oracle database has been fully populated with all of the vehicle inventory information the office has on file, a new E-form will be made available to all the transit systems for them to electronically submit property inventory information to the office – saving time, money, and trees!" said Pam Lee, Programming Coordinator for the OPT.

This database will also be used to export information into the Public Transit Equipment and Facility Management System (PTMS) process. All of the information that will be maintained in the Oracle database will also be available in other formats such as Excel and PDF.

AVL GPS, from page 1

they were very impressed by the power and capability of the package.

- Database transfer is then conducted in support of the software. Two basic databases are involved. The first is the mapping, or “geographic information system (GIS)” database. This is essentially a very detailed computer map which includes all counties where service is given. The second is the existing demand-response client database. The contract with

RouteMatch specifies that RouteMatch is responsible for the data transfer (so far, no problems have been identified with the various old databases that are out there). Sue Switzer, staff support from RouteMatch for Iowa, works the mechanics of transferring databases to the new software and ensures proper installation.

- After the installation of software and data transfer, Sue will remain in the area to train dispatchers and

management as well as respond to questions and trouble-shoot. The software is fairly intuitive, somewhat along the format of a conventional Windows® screen, so successful orientation appears to go fairly rapidly.

- Finally comes the radio study. Each region will get its own unique study, which will identify radio and tower issues and set the cost estimate for the Phase Two deployment of AVL/GPS equipment. Mentor Engineering is the subcontractor for the study.

In addition to the basic Phase One deployment package, other optional features offered include:

- Accounting integration, for combining a variety of packages - Peachtree is one package that is often mentioned. A note to financial personnel: If you are thinking about a new accounting package, now may be the time to move on it. However, if you see a problem here, the invoicing system and the accounting system do not have to be integrated under RouteMatch software.
- Demand Response and Fixed Route capabilities - Dodger Area Rapid Transit (DART) and Mid-Iowa Development Association (MIDAS), both based in Fort Dodge, have decided to purchase the fixed route package. Keyline Transit of

Dubuque also has the package, which was purchased prior to participation in the statewide consortium.

- Inter-Regional Coordination – Bob Krause, OPT’s Information Technology program manager, finds the coordination module especially intriguing. “It automatically allows scheduling and dispatching across regional boundaries to include transfer points. If it is ever implemented, it may offer opportunities for statewide bus service that we do not currently have,” said Krause. No members of the consortium have purchased this package. However, it does remain an option.

Iowa transit agencies that have not yet joined the consortium and would like to do so still have that option as long as the contract is open. However, agencies that were initial members of the consortium have the first rights to available state and federal aid that has been earmarked to support the project. Other funding sources, however, might be identified and pursued.

Currently, we have funds to completely support Phase One and most of the funds to support Phase Two. In addition, OPT will continue to seek federal funds to complete the project once the radio studies are completed and costs are identified. Aid contributions currently pay for 75 percent of the cost of installation.

PHASE ONE DEPLOYMENT SEQUENCING

Deployments for Phase One will be in groups of three to fit the installation and training capabilities of RouteMatch. Working with RouteMatch, OPT was able to identify the following tentative deployment sequence:

FIRST TRIAD

- Region 9 – River Bend Transit, Davenport
- Region 3 – RIDES, Spencer
- Region 14 – Southern Iowa Trolley, Creston

SECOND TRIAD

- Region 5 – MIDAS/DART, Fort Dodge
- Region 12 – Western Iowa Transit System, Carroll
- Region 1 – Northeast Iowa Regional Transit System, Decorah

THIRD TRIAD

- Region 8 – Delaware, Dubuque & Jackson Counties RTA, Dubuque
- Region 13 – Southwest Iowa Transit Agency, Atlantic
- Region 7 – Iowa Northland Regional Transit Commission, Waterloo

FOURTH TRIAD

- Region 10 – East Central Iowa Transit, Cedar Rapids
- Region 11 – Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency, Des Moines
- Region 6 – Region 6 Planning Commission, Marshalltown

FIFTH TRIAD

- Region 15, 10/15 Transit
- Region 16 – Southeast Iowa Regional Planning Commission/Regional Transit Authority, Burlington
- Ames Transit Agency (tentative)

2005

February

Feb. 8, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, IA

Feb. 23, Iowa Public Transit Association's Legislative Day at State Capitol, Des Moines, IA (For more information contact Bev Thomas, 515-440-6057.)

March

Mar. 6-8, American Public Transit Association's (APTA) Legislative Conference, Washington, D.C. (For program information contact Rich Weaver, 202-496-4809. For registration information contact Heather Rachels, 202-496-4838.)

Mar. 8, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, IA

April

April 9, DOT small equipment auction, Ames, IA (For more information contact Mike Holl, 515-239-1576.)

April 11-12, Iowa Transportation Commission tour/public input meeting, location to be determined.

May

May 10, Iowa Transportation Commission meeting, Ames, IA

May 10-12, Disadvantaged Business Enterprise training course, Kansas City, MO (For more information contact Myrna Sirleaf, National Training Institute 732-932-1700, ext. 228.)

May 21-27, Community Transportation Association of America Expo 2005, St. Louis, MO (For more information visit their Web site <http://www.ctaa.org/>.)

May 30, DOT offices closed in observance of Memorial Day

June

June 4, DOT vehicle auction, Ames, IA (For more information contact Mike Holl, 515-239-1576.)

June 8-10, Iowa Public Transit Association's Annual Meeting, Cedar Rapids, IA (For more information contact Bev Thomas, 515-440-6057.)

June 11, Iowa Public Transit Association/Iowa DOT Annual Bus Rodeo, Cedar Rapids, IA (For more information contact Bev Thomas, 515-440-6057.)

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)

Transit training library Feature Training Information Please ...

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 the Office of Public Transit's publications or videos, call Lynn Zook, 515-239-1875, or e-mail your request to lynn.zook@dot.iowa.gov.



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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