

DAKOTA

TRANSPORTER

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Drivers of the Year Honored

Brenda Schweitzer, Arrow Public Transit

With a special luncheon Sept. 22, the Dakota Transit Association honored two very important people within our organization.

The Starlite Ballroom in Sioux Falls, SD, was the setting for a wonderful meal, complete with an ice sculpture of a transit bus. Approximately 56 guests listened as DTA President, Ron Baumgart, thanked SURTC for sponsoring the luncheon, and also recognized present board members and the three newly elected board members. President Baumgart said it was his privilege to thank the many people who reach out and are transit's true ambassadors. Without our drivers, there would be no transportation. There were several wonderful applicants for the designated "Driver of the Year."

This year's honorees are: **Cheryle Urlacher**, driver for Southwest Transportation based in Bowman, ND. Cheryle is a mother of three and has been driving for Southwest Transportation for more than 10 years. Cheryle's nominating director, Donna Schaff, wrote of Cheryle's genuine concern for her passengers, being unfailingly reliable with just an on-call and backup driver basis for a four-county area, primarily consisting of out-of-town trips. She treats all passengers with courtesy and respect, with Donna receiving several calls of appreciation and commendation from those that have the pleasure of traveling with Cheryle. Donna also recognized Cheryle's attention to vehicle maintenance and needs, making sure



that they were always ready to go. Cheryle thanked Donna for the nomination and the organization for the award and coat. The challenge of providing transportation in the remote area of North Dakota was noted by Cheryle, and through her experience and listening to the seminars presented at the DTA conference, Cheryle emphasized the need of additional funding for transportation.

Dave Chipman, a retired boss of 36 years from Homestake Gold Mines, and employee of Prairie Hill's Transit was named South Dakota Driver of the Year. Until the luncheon, Dave was still unsure "why he would be at this conference."

Barb Cline, director of Prairie Hills Transit, introduced Dave. He started his job with Prairie Hill's Transit after retiring from Homestake...looking for "just a few hours." Quickly Dave's keen sense of humor and willingness to keep the buses rolling were great assets to the project. Dave thoughtfully referred to each ride individually as "Driving Miss Daisy." His few hours turned into more hours than his pension allowed, so he quit for a time. Dave never totally left the transit, as the new vehicles, the building and the expanding service kept him drawn in. Telling Barb he "really missed the people," Dave asked her if there would be a place for him again. Keeping an ear on the radio, Dave often is the one to offer assistance when schedules are tight. His above-average driving record, work history, and customer service are all noted in surveys, making him a favorite with riders because of his caring manner and safe vehicle operation. Prairie Hills is also honored with his portrayal of Santa Claus for children and seniors at Christmas time.





DTA: Where Do We Go from Here?

Ron Baumgart, DTA President
River Cities Transit
Pierre, SD

Thanks, to everyone who attended our Dakota Transit Association (DTA) Conference Sept. 20-23, in Sioux Falls.

I really enjoy getting to know everyone better and sharing our stories. A special thank you goes to the DTA board members and North and South Dakota DOT's who spent a great amount of time planning the conference. For members that missed the conference this year, the DTA board hopes to see you at the next conference.

DTA elected new board members to replace Donna Noel, Bennett County Senior Citizens, Martin, SD, and Darrell Michalenko, Minot City Transit, Minot, ND. Thanks to both of them for serving two terms on the board. We plan on using some of their expertise in the future. New board members are Jacqueline Senger, North Central Planning Council, Devils Lake, ND; Barb Ballensky, Vermillion Public Transit, Vermillion, SD; and Peggy Morris, Spink County Public Transit & Senior Center, Redfield, SD. I welcome you to the board of directors and promise we will have a busy and exciting year.

Also, thanks, to our membership for your support of the many changes and innovations that were recommended by the board. As we pursue and implement these changes I feel the future of DTA is very bright.

The Board will have its next meeting Nov. 8-9, in Fargo, ND. One of the agenda items for this meeting will be to work on our alliance with the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center (SURTC). As DTA plans for the future and how to serve our membership, our alliance with SURTC will be very important. We believe we need a home base to provide credibility and reliability to continue our growth. The potential is endless as we look at research, development of Web pages, computer programs, training, task forces development, and the great expertise that SURTC can provide.

At our November board meeting, we will name the individuals appointed to the two task forces. The topics for our two task forces will be (a) future training that DTA needs to provide our membership, and (b) working to facilitate an insurance pool for our property insurance. I want to thank the people that have volunteered to serve on these task forces and to those that have provided ideas for future training. We will be contacting the individual task force members after our November meeting.

With the legislative sessions coming up soon, DTA is preparing to be a player in both the North and South Dakota Legislature. The board believes strongly about having our issues brought to the legislators in a professional and credible manner. In North Dakota DTA is working with Erica Cermak, executive director of North Dakota Senior Service

Providers. I have made contact with Steve Willard with Willard & Associates of Pierre, SD, to work for DTA in the South Dakota Legislature. The DTA Board will work on finalizing these details at our November meeting. The board believes our professional exposure to the legislatures should be a long-term commitment. I must emphasize this does not lessen our need as transportation providers to be there for these individuals and provide the needed testimonies and life stories that are needed at the legislative hearings and throughout the year.

It is never too soon to start planning next year's conference which will be held in Minot, ND. The conference is scheduled at the Holiday Inn Riverside, 2200 Burdick Expressway East, Minot, ND, Sept. 19 - 22, 2005. We are hoping to have vendors' displays and several other new items at this conference. I am counting on all members for help in topic selection, program input, recruiting new members, and promoting DTA. As always, the board wants to thank you for your continued support of [Dakota Transit Association](#).

Get Involved

Bruce Fuchs, ND DOT

After returning from the Minnesota Public Transit Conference, I am having visions of what DTA can be.

Several vendors want to exhibit their products at our DTA conference but have never been approached or provided the opportunity. They are not only interested in showing their latest products, but are willing to put on training sessions, help pay for meals, breaks, etc. The inclusion of these vendors would add a whole new dimension to our conference.

The membership of DTA has remained stagnant and that is NOT a good sign. It is in the best interests of all concerned to expand the member base and in turn this will expand the idea base. The board cannot do this by themselves, it is up to each and every one of the members to recruit new members.

With that said, I cannot stress how important it is that you, the members, actively participate. The days of sitting back and letting others do everything for you are over. An organization is only as good as its membership and I think this organization is full of great members who are on the verge of doing some great things in the areas of insurance, training and information sharing. Contact any of the DTA board members and let them know you are willing to help. When the board meets they can use the list of volunteers to help carry out the agenda.

Don't forget to establish a running dialogue with the board. Nowhere is it written that the business of DTA can only be transacted once a year at the DTA conference. **Remember! Transit is a year-round business!**



Coordination and Cooperation— Finding Partnerships for Funding

Carol Wright, James River Transit
Jamestown, ND

The DTA Annual Conference in Sioux Falls, SD, Sept. 20-23 was a great opportunity to learn ways to improve our coordination and cooperation efforts. Jill Hough, Director of the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center (SURTC), North Dakota State University in Fargo, facilitated sessions on discovering potential partners and creative fundraising ideas.

Two project directors were asked to present information on successful fundraising efforts their organizations had conducted. Linda Freeman, Director of Kenmare, ND, Wheels and Meals (KWM), discussed the direct-mail campaign that she and other project directors from the region recently completed. They enlisted the help of Bremer Bank as a partner. A \$5,000 grant covered overhead costs such as printing and postage. KWM and the other regional transit projects targeted businesses and individuals in each of their respective communities. The campaign was a big success and worth the diligent effort it took to accomplish their fundraising goals. The mailing campaign also presented a good opportunity to remind the public about the valuable services their transit agencies provide.

Brenda Schweitzer, Director of Arrow Public Transit (APT) in Lemmon, SD, presented information on their Radio-a-thon. They have been doing this fundraiser for approximately 11 years. The local radio station partners with APT to produce the show at no cost to the transit agency. Other expenses are minimal (approximately \$300). They take pledges from individuals and businesses in the listening area. In addition to raising more than \$9,000, this fundraiser also allows the transit agency to get its message out to area listeners.

Other directors that briefly shared ideas with the conference delegates included:

- Charlotte Zaun, Minot Commission on Aging in Minot, ND, shared information about the Coffee Shop and Dinner Theatre productions held at their facility.
- Joan Campbell, South Central Adult Services in Valley City, ND, shared experiences of partnering with Mercy Hospital in building an assisted living center called Bridgewater Estates. She also discussed an endowment fund started by their agency. Joan also recommended contacting local law firms informing them of the community services provided by your transit agency.
- Midge Kuntz, Elder Care in Dickinson, ND, spoke on the Dickinson Coalition of Charitable Organizations. These agencies compiled, printed, and distributed a brochure

explaining the mission and services provided by each agency. They also organized a display board featuring the coalition partner agencies that can be taken to events throughout the area.

- Paul Grindeland, Fargo Senior Commission in Fargo, ND, added to the concept by discussing the “Leave a Legacy of the Red River Valley” effort happening in the Fargo/Moorhead/West Fargo area. Paul also discussed his agency’s “Walk for Meals on Wheels” fundraiser which raises annually \$10,000 to \$15,000.
- Pamela Ternes, Standing Rock Public Transportation in Fort Yates, ND, discussed how Sitting Bull College formed a construction company to provide on-the-job training for college students and bring additional income to the college. Pamela encouraged us to do a better job of telling our story. Their college president has told their story on the Today Show on NBC, Parade Magazine and Time Magazine.
- LaMae Bergan, Senior Meals and Services (SMS) in Devils Lake, ND, gave specifics on how their annual Pie Festival works. A huge volunteer effort and little overhead are characteristics of this event, which brings in approximately \$15,000 per year. SMS also holds an annual Sweet Shop sale selling Christmas sweets close to the holidays. The net income from that event is about \$6,000 per year.
- Kevin Disburg, driver for Rivers Cities Transit (RCT) in Pierre, SD, encouraged projects to not only sell advertising on the buses for cash, but to barter with other agencies for services in exchange for advertising space. One of their most successful arrangements is with a local radio station. RCT trades advertising space on their buses for an equivalent dollar amount of airtime on the radio station. He emphasized the importance of having policies in place for advertising sales.
- Neil Arntzen, chairman of the board of directors for Souris Basin Transportation (SBT), Minot, ND, indicated the importance of working closely with county commissioners and making sure they understand the importance of the transit services you provide within each of their counties. SBT was able to secure \$1,500 additional funds from each county commission representing the seven counties they serve to cover a \$10,000 operating deficit this year.

In small group discussions, participants developed plans for six of the topics discussed in the morning.

- Endowments
- Starting a second business
- Partnership with local governments
- Advertising on vehicles
- Starting and growing an annual event, and
- Partnership with local school and/or university

[\(Coordination – continued on page 4\)](#)

Transportation Coordination

Joan Campbell
South Central Adult Service Council
Valley City, ND

At the recent DTA annual meeting held in Sioux Falls, Gary Hegland from the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center (SURTC) presented a session on transportation coordination.



One of the areas I found most interesting was the differences and similarities in the provision of services within North Dakota's eight planning regions. Gary conducted focus groups throughout the state. Attending the group meetings were representatives from city/county agencies, school bus companies, senior service providers, park districts, etc.

What was evident in Gary's presentation was the problem of providing transit services to the rural population in all eight regions. In one region there was no rural transportation services and in others the services were limited to once-a-month trips into a larger service area.

Other issues addressed were the coordination between entities in some regions. Employees needing rides to the job site were unable to coordinate rides because of fragmented services. Lack of public awareness of services available was also an issue addressed in the focus groups. How to get the word out to the general public on the benefits of utilizing public transit was also discussed.

In conclusion, North Dakota has a large number of buses, vans, school buses, nursing home vehicles and general public disability vehicles that provide transportation to a select segment of the population. However, there are many gaps that need to be filled to provide services to all those in need. This is where the coordination of transportation services should begin.

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More details on these discussions will be available on the DTA website. These types of sessions are valuable because association members can take home specific ideas that have been proven successful by other projects in the Dakotas. This session also provided us with resource people from our association to call if we want more information about particular fundraisers or partnerships.

How to Effectively Influence Congress and the State Legislature without Leaving Home

Carol Wright, James River Transit
Jamestown, ND

Paul Beddoe, associate director of the National Association of Counties, came to the DTA meeting to share low-cost methods of keeping the state and federal legislators well-informed about transit issues. He said the first step is to prepare ourselves, transit operators, by knowing:

- the issues,
- the members,
- the key dates for action,
- the votes (Keep track of their votes and let them know you know), and
- how to approach them.

The conferees were introduced to a new term, "kitchen cabinet." The kitchen cabinet is made up of people who we know well and trust; to share our transit story with others. It's very important to build personal relationships with friends of transit as well as the legislators; including their chief of staff, schedulers, and legislative directors (both in Washington and at the state level). Beddoe encouraged transit operators to attend legislators' public meetings and invite them to transit meetings. Make contact with them at home as much as possible rather than in Washington.

Since 9/11, mail has been the least-effective method of contacting your legislatures, Beddoe says. Other options are telephoning, faxing, and e-mailing. Be brief, cover only one subject per message. Try to get diversity. In other words, get people from other industries to share support of your endeavors with the congressional delegations. When you call to talk to the congressman be willing to talk to the staff; it can pay dividends and builds relationships. The staff brief and do research for the congressman so it is important that they know about transit.

If you have the opportunity to give testimony at any field hearings take advantage of it. A hearing is a procedure for developing a record from which to develop pros and cons to an issue. It is important to have supporting statements on your issues at these events.

Some important lobbying axioms:

- Honesty is not the best policy...it is the only policy!
- You don't make peace by talking to your allies.
- Remember today's opponents may be tomorrow's ally.
- Always be civil no matter how irritating the opponents may appear to be.
- The top "no-no" in legislative relations is to circumvent staff and talk to the member.
- Public opinion affects legislative opinion.
- Legislative staff can seem uniformed, but so can an 800 pound gorilla – you don't want to rile either one.

Beddoe's closing remark was that "you really can make a difference and effectively influence Congress or your state legislature from your home or office. It's the new trend in lobbying, be a part of it!" For more information go to <http://www.naco.org>.

The Congressional delegation on the Web

NORTH DAKOTA:

Byron Dorgan • <http://dorgan.senate.gov/>
Kent Conrad • <http://conrad.senate.gov/nd/se-nd.html>
Earl Pomeroy • <http://www.pomeroy.house.gov/>

SOUTH DAKOTA:

John Thune • <http://www.johnthune.com/>
Tim Johnson • <http://www.senate.gov/~johnson/>
Stephanie Herseth • <http://www.hersethforcongress.org/>

Cooperation in Community Transportation: New Directions

Chris Zeilinger
Assistant Director CTA

In preparing for the future of transit in the Dakotas, it may be helpful to look at present facts and trends. Let's pay particular attention to the demographic trends relating to those people most likely to use transit in North and South Dakota: the young, the old, the disabled and the poor.

While the overall number of people younger than 18 isn't growing that rapidly in the Dakotas, the travel patterns of young people are becoming more of a transit issue. In contrast to earlier generations, today's young people are programmed with sports, youth groups and other activities, all of which involve transportation.

Over the past 40 or 50 years, economic factors have compelled nearly all adults in households to work, creating additional transportation demands to get kids to day care, after school care, etc. This is an element of travel demand that has become even more pronounced since the "welfare reforms" of 1996. Curiously, the U.S. Department of Education invests \$1 billion a year in after-school care and programs for kids, but study after study shows these programs don't come close to meeting their full potential, generally because of poor transportation – even though transportation is an eligible use of those program dollars!

In rural areas, such as most of North and South Dakota, transportation is a vital component of the educational system, as distances between kids' homes and schools are

far too great to walk most of the time. However, most rural school districts are in a bind because the funds they receive from the state for transportation increasingly fail to cover the cost of this elaborate and expensive rural transportation network.

There also is an important, if somewhat morbid, aspect to kids' travel that should inspire more bus utilization in the future. Teens and motor vehicles are a deadly combination, with a disproportionate share of highway fatalities involving teen motorists. Most of these are on evenings and weekends. The most dangerous way by far for a child to get to school is to have a teen driver. These drivers account for 10 times as many school trip fatalities as school buses or transit buses.

North Dakota, has more longer-lived people than any other state. South Dakota isn't far behind. Several factors contribute to the above-average age of the Dakotan population. There are more elderly people in general, thanks to medical advances, nutrition, etc. However, what really drives up the average age of the population is that many middle-aged adults no longer reside in the Dakotas, especially in the smaller cities and towns.

We are well aware of the fact that, sooner or later, transit is necessary for almost every senior citizen. What is really challenging us, though, is that the Dakotas are losing much of the caregiver population. As a result, family members are counting on local public and community transit to do more to address the travel needs of older Dakotans. This gets even more complicated as seniors' travel needs tend to be for greater and greater distances, as health care becomes centralized, or even as banks, stores, churches, etc., become concentrated in a few growing population clusters around the Upper Great Plains.

There is no question that persons with disabilities need public and community transportation. What is challenging is that, as with the senior population, the expectations of quality of life, the ability to maintain independent lifestyles, and even the expectations to enter and remain in the workforce regardless of disability status all have grown far more than the capacity of our transportation networks.

In previous generations, we may have felt proud of our ability to transport disabled persons to doctors, therapies, or the like one or two or three times a week. Today, that's not good enough, as we're being expected – rightfully so – to transport persons with disabilities to their jobs five days a week and then take them shopping and socializing when they're not working. That's the kind of mobility those of us without disabilities take for granted, but it's a fiscally challenging obligation to uphold for our service to those with disabilities.

Poverty in North and South Dakota while below national averages, certainly is present, especially Indian reservations and in the larger cities. "Welfare Reform" ended the excuse for people without transportation to

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(New Directions – continued from page 5)

remain on the welfare rolls, but have we been able to respond to the demands. An entry-level job often involves traveling long distances at unconventional hours. Those trips are the most expensive or challenging for us as transit providers to operate. However those trips are a lifeline out of poverty, and must somehow be provided.

How do we put together the puzzle that is the Dakotas' transit future? Look close to home to see what changes are afoot. If you see changes in seniors' medical transportation patterns, track down the people in the state office of rural health and learn more about Medicare Rural Flexibility Grants and local critical access hospital designations, which can allow Medicare dollars to be used to pay for routine, non-emergency transportation to Medicare-covered services. If people in your community with disabilities are becoming enrolled in job training or vocational rehabilitation programs, find out about the "Ticket to Work" program, which can provide transportation benefits to these individuals. If your local schools are suffering because of increased transportation costs, find ways to work with them to meet some of those student mobility needs. We have spent far too many years trembling in fear of perceived federal transit and school bus restrictions that don't even really exist. You can set up local partnerships to change that picture.

Above all, remain engaged in your state and in your community. Remember, ours is not a business in which we simply run buses around in oblivious circles. We are agents of change and of opportunity in our communities. Our mission is to do what it takes to get people where they need to go.

(From a presentation at the DTA conference)

2004 Paratransit Bus Roadeo

Darrell Francis, Souris Basin Transportation
Minot, ND

The 15th Annual North Dakota Paratransit Roadeo was Aug. 28, 2004, at the city of Minot public works parking lot. With a very nice day, 31 drivers went through the obstacle course, testing, pre-trip inspection and wheelchair operation.



There were a few new faces mixed in with the experienced drivers and the course looked intimidating but possible. Limited space in some areas of the course reduced the distance between the obstacles, making the course more of a challenge. The wheelchair and pre-trip inspection were done inside the building, providing a more isolated area for the drivers to concentrate.

For the past 15 years, the cones have been the same color and some of the turns and stops have been in the same place, but the faces and experience has changed. Since last year's roadeo, drivers have one more year of experience behind the wheel, federal regulations have changed, buses are updated and wheelchair lift safety features have been added. The greatest change of all is the demands we put on the drivers to accommodate the public. Giving the drivers a chance to test their skills and provide a day of training during the roadeo will benefit all their customers. The real winners are the passengers they serve.

Rick Thoms and I were able to put on a PASS class for 24 drivers on Sunday at the International Inn and Darrell Michelanko did a defensive driving course for the bus drivers on Saturday afternoon and Sunday for 15 drivers. The courses, coupled with a few hours of sharing stories and experiences, provided some new ideas for the drivers to use and share with their coworkers. The day-after training sessions proved to be beneficial to the drivers.

At the awards banquet held Saturday night, those of us at Souris Basin Transportation were able to thank the judges for their time and show our appreciation to the drivers who attended. First place went to Dennis Ulmer of Elder Care; Second place went to Den Kuhenenmed of Souris Basin Transportation, Ed Stickle of James River Transit earned third; Niela Rae Ludwik of West River Transportation, fourth; and Phil Dahle of Souris Basin Transportation, fifth.

South Dakota winners were: Ricky Anderson of River Cities Transit, first; Rickard Pearson of Arrow Transit, second; Kevin Disburg of River Cities Transit, third; Dave Wright of Arrow Transit, fourth; and Annette Gross of Prairie Hills Transit, fifth.

It takes a great deal of time to prepare for a Roadeo, but the success also depends on the volunteer judges who return and share their experiences. I am truly grateful to the men and women who give up their Saturday and Sunday to assist in this event. Again, I would like to express our gratitude to the drivers, spouses, and project directors for a very successful and memorable Roadeo. We hope we will be able to be as successful with the 16th Annual Roadeo next year. Once again congratulations to Den Kuhenenmed, Souris Basin Transportation, for winning the 2004 National CTAA Paratransit Roadeo, body on chassis division, in Seattle, Wash., in June, 2004. Good luck to the future North and South Dakota drivers who will represent the states at the Nationals next year in St. Louis.

PASS Training

Kevin Disburg, Driver Supervisor
River Cities Transit
Pierre, SD

I attended a PASS Training Session at the North and South Dakota Paratransit Bus Roadeo, Aug. 29, 2004, in Minot, ND. The instructors were Darrell Francis, Minot City Transit, and Rick Thoms, Souris Basin Transportation of Minot. The session was very informative.



Topics included wheelchair loading and unloading, securing wheel chair, and communicating with passengers who have disabilities. Some of the stories that went along with these topics were very humorous. I'm sure everyone who has been in transit for any length of time has a story or two of their own.

To me, the best part of the session was the sharing of these stories, situations, and knowledge gained from other transit drivers. The instructors handed out materials that covered all types of situations. The group was able to interact and discuss these "problems" or situations and share valuable knowledge. Included in our discussion was information about how other drivers handle loading and unloading procedures with individuals in a wheelchair. We learned which way wheelchair passengers should face, loading and unloading, on the lift. We also learned the correct procedure for using the lift to load ambulatory passengers who don't like to use the steps. The instructors covered ADA rules and requirements. I recommend this training to all in the transit industry who haven't yet attended.

It was worth my time and the trip to Minot, and I hope it has made me a better transit driver. It opened my eyes to a glimpse of what it might be like to be a transit passenger – with or without disabilities.

The most humorous part of the session was the handout titled, "A Speed and Comprehensive Exercise." I won't spoil it by telling you the last step of the exercise. However, it is very funny to go through the steps of the "test" and then find out how badly you blew it. For any questions on this exercise, please contact Darrell Francis, Minot City Transit. I'm sure he'd get a kick out of leading you through the exercise.

Are You Prepared for Work?

Gary Hegland
SURTC

Have you prepared yourself to give your best at work? Do you treat yourself to sufficient food, exercise and sleep to perform at your peak? This article does not give you a diet or exercise program to follow, but it can help you assess whether you give yourself enough sleep.



Use the Sleep Debt Index (SDI) to evaluate your overall daytime sleepiness. It is a scientifically developed tool to assess your sleep debt. Ask yourself, how likely I am going to fall asleep in the following situations. Score yourself according to the following scale:

- 0 = Would never doze off
- 1 = Slight chance of dozing
- 2 = Moderate chance of dozing
- 3 = High chance of dozing off
- ___ Sitting and reading
- ___ Watching TV
- ___ Sitting, inactive in a public place (e.g., a theater or a meeting)
- ___ As a passenger in a car for an hour without a break
- ___ Lying down to rest in the afternoon when circumstances permit
- ___ Sitting and talking to someone
- ___ Sitting quietly after lunch without alcohol
- ___ In a car, while stopped for a few minutes in traffic
- ___ Total Score

If your total score is:

- 0 to 5 Slight or no sleep debt
- 6 to 10 Moderate sleep debt
- 11 to 20 Heavy sleep debt
- 21 to 24 Extreme sleep debt

If your score is over 20 you should seek medical advice. If your score is 5 or less, you do not have a serious sleep debt, but it is probably worthwhile for you to examine your personal work/sleep pattern and determine where changes are possible that will reduce your sleep debt and improve alertness. If your score is between 6 and 20, you should develop a personal fatigue management plan. For complete report please go to "Toolbox for Transit Operator Fatigue," Transportation Cooperative Research Program Report 81, also available at http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_81.pdf.

Congratulations Bruce Fuchs!

Bruce Fuchs will represent North Dakota for three years as one of four new members on the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Rural Transit Assistance Program's (RTAP) National Program Review Board. Bruce joined new members Michael Frisch, Crookston, MN; Debra Gleason, Steuben, NY; and Betty L. Newell, Harrisonburg, VA, for board orientation on Oct. 21, 2004, in Roanoke, VA.

The National Review Board was established in 1987 to guide the RTAP national program in developing its products and services to support state RTAP programs. It is comprised of five state transit officials and six rural transit operators and meets in an official capacity twice a year.

As board member, Bruce is required to work for a state transit agency that administers federal rural transit assistance funds. He must have the flexibility to attend the two official meetings of the board held each project year.

Board members shall 1) provide the National Program with guidance on priorities in the areas of training materials development, information dissemination, and technical assistance; 2) Oversee the quality of National Program products and services; and 3) Promote the National Program to state RTAP's and local operators. Board Members will often serve as subject matter experts to committees of the board established to review and comment on specific National Project materials under development.

Rick Thoms, Souris Basin Transportation, Minot, ND, was a previous member, and Barb Cline of Prairie Hills Transit, Spearfish, SD, is a current member.

Cline Elected to CTAA Board of Directors

Barbara Cline, transportation director for Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish, SD, was elected to the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) Board of Directors. Cline was elected by her peers in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming to serve as Upper Midwest delegate. Cline previously served the association and represented her state as South Dakota state delegate.

"We are pleased to welcome Barbara to the Board," said CTAA Board of Directors President David White of Ansonia, Connecticut. "Barbara represents a vital part of the community transportation network — one for which this association has worked tremendously hard — and we look forward to her expertise on rural and senior transportation issues."

Cline will serve a three-year term with the CTAA Board of Directors. The CTAA is a national membership organization composed of more than 5,000 organizations and individuals dedicated to bringing innovative transportation options to every community in the nation.

Transitions in Transit

Minnesota Public Transit Conference

Velda Bentson

ROCS Transit

Lake Andes, SD

Minneapolis hosted the Minnesota Public Transit Association (MPTA) Conference "Transitions in Transit," in which MPTA celebrated 30 years of promoting public transit and its value to the state. Representatives from North and South Dakota included Ron Baumgart and Kevin Disburg, River Cities Transit, Pierre, SD; Bruce Fuchs, North Dakota DOT, Bismarck, ND; Jackie Matthews and Melissa Schofield, South Dakota DOT, Pierre, SD; Carol Wright, James River Transit, Jamestown, ND; Del Peterson, Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, Fargo, ND; and myself. The conference was held at The Depot, the site of the former Milwaukee Railroad train depot downtown.

Sessions attended by the Dakota delegation included Coaching for Results, Rules for Rivals, and Fleet Maintenance. The most interesting session was on Transit Security which has four main components: 1) **Prepare** 2) **Prevent** 3) **Respond** 4) **Recover**. How do you prepare? Identify your participants and keep a list of employee's names and numbers in one location. Also include emergency personnel numbers, protocol in case of emergencies and a comprehensive list of assets. How do you prevent? What training has or should take place? Who do we train? Are you connected to your county plan? Is there a communication network established? How do you respond? Clarify your chain of command, share your lists and be prepared to provide the needed transportation — whether it is an evacuation demand or shelter-type emergency. How do you recover? Assess and plan for the future. Ask questions like, "Could we simplify anything the next time?"

Minnesota will have a workshop on emergency preparedness for rural transit systems in February. Attendance is recommended for those who do not have a system in place. More information is available at <http://www.dot.mn.us>. Perhaps North and South Dakota may want to conduct a similar workshop. Thanks to the MPTA for inviting us. The hospitality was magnificent and a rewarding experience was had by all.

Why don't they put HOV lanes through tunnels?

To avoid carpool tunnel syndrome.

Lyn Hellegaard Seminar: Marketing on a Shoe String Budget

Midge Kuntz, Elder Care
Dickinson, ND



Lyn Hellegaard

A marketing plan is the first step to marketing your business, according to Lyn Hellegaard, instructor for the TEL8 workshop "Marketing on a Shoe String Budget" held Sept. 16. Remember, it is just a plan, and it has to change according to available funding, according to needs, etc. It must be evaluated annually, and is a good supplement to your business plan.

Evaluate your agency's strengths and weaknesses. This can be done from your customer's perspective, which means that what you see as strength can actually be a weakness from your customer's viewpoint. Take a look at your drivers. You may see them as strength, because they are the driving force of the agency. If they are courteous, but unwilling to help passengers, they become a weakness, doing more harm than good. After you've completed your evaluation, you have the daunting task of strengthening your weaknesses and solidifying your strengths.

Conducting an internal audit will help you identify your target market. Who uses your service? This group is your primary target market. They have a similar need that you're filling. A secondary market can be a disturbing service to your primary market, or it can provide you with an area to mark for growth. Next, look at your organization's specialty. Is it meals-on-wheels delivery? Is it hauling freight? What is it? It should be apparent to the public exactly what it is that you do.

Next, you should consider program growth. Do you want growth? Is there funding available for you to grow? Who are your prospects? Think about those who aren't using your service now. Can they recognize your vehicles? Ask five to 10 people on the street to list two service improvements they've seen in the last year. This will give you a very real idea of the image your organization presents to the public. You can start from there.

Lyn included some hints about writing copy. Most of us don't have funding available to hire advertising experts, but we do try to get our message out there. She urged us to do our research and use the resources you have at hand, such as focus groups that can help with terminology. If you're creating jingles, or if you're including testimonies, refrain from using acronyms. Your audience may not recognize them, and you won't achieve your goal of getting your name out there.

There are many ways of getting your name out in print. Brochures, catalogs of services, sales letters, newspaper ads, press releases, and posters are just a few options that Lyn discussed with the class. She also mentioned statement stuffers, not ours, but others like utility companies, or cable TV, i.e. MDU or Cable ONE. If you put your short, catchy message on an appropriate size, they might agree to include it in their statements. If you're just trying to get them to call you, don't overload on the information - you can share that on the telephone.

Lyn advised "branding" all your materials, so that the public recognizes your look, and will associate it with your service. Think about the look of Band-Aids, Coke, and Kleenex. There's a high recognition factor with all of us for those items. So consistently use the same colors, patterns, or logo and you'll be more successful in your efforts.

When using direct mail, make sure you use a good database. You may have to purchase one, so find one that identifies the population that you want to solicit. Decide what one thing you want to focus on in this mailing. If you have multiple needs, do multiple mailings.

Lastly, a "hidden marketing department" is your own staff. Let them know what the agency goals are, and what you have planned. Offer to help them talk to organizations they belong to so they can share information about your service. Their personal relationship with the organization is a benefit to the service.

Lyn shared many good ideas for marketing and fundraising in this class. I hope to utilize as many as possible in the coming years. The video of Lyn's presentation as well as the handouts are available at <http://www.surtc.org/training/>.

JOB OPENING

River Cities Transit has openings for two full-time drivers with hours that will vary because of the extended hours of operation. Full benefit package. Wages DOE. For more information please call Ron Baumgart at (605) 945-2360 or email ron.rct@midconetwork.com.

Cline Chairs National RTAP Board

Barbara Cline, serves as Chair of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) National Program Review Board. The Review Board was established in 1987 to provide guidance to the RTAP National Program in the development of its products and services to support the RTAP State Program. The Board has 11 members: five state transit officials and six rural transit operators from across the United States. Cline is director of Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish, SD.



RTAP was created by Congress in 1986 to provide training, technical assistance and research activities that will improve rural transit. Specific goals of RTAP are to identify and disseminate information and training to rural transit operators who receive federal funding and to provide technical assistance services and materials to state programs. The result is sustained improvement and standardization of local service delivery to transit members of rural communities, many of whom are elderly and/or disabled, and require special equipment and assistance.

Cline says the national RTAP program exemplifies the type of federal-state-local partnership that is essential to the success of local programs. Funded by the Federal Transit Administration, the national RTAP program is administered by the American Public Works Association in a consortium arrangement with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Cline also serves as the South Dakota delegate of CTAA.

RTAP was established to fit the uniqueness of rural transit systems. For example: one-third of all rural systems have less than four vehicles. Nearly half of the passengers are elderly and/or disabled. Fifty-two percent of the systems cover entire counties; while 21 percent are multi-county systems like Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish, SD. Specially developed training and information is needed to help these systems provide professional, safe and dependable service.

Cline's three year term began in 2001 and will run through 2005. As chair she has been part of the national "United We Ride" coordination effort, participated in the recent National Public Works week in Washington, DC, as a speaker for "Transit in Rural Communities: The Rural Transit Assistance Program," and serves on the Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Committee "Cost Benefit Analysis of Providing Non-Emergency Medical Transportation Benefits."

Cline says, one of the most interesting projects was to develop the new RTAP training tool-"Roles and Responsibilities of Transit Managers-Leading the Rural Transit Agency." The three-video training module was developed in Washington, DC, when a film company set up an actual sound and filming studio at the hotel. An outside moderator worked with two separate groups to encompass the three central themes: Leadership: "Knowing Your Values and Living Them," "Hiring, Training and Keeping the Best People," and "Effective and Efficient Operations."

2004-05 DTA Board of Directors



The 2004 – 2005 Dakota Transit Association board of directors from left to right: Joan Campbell, South Central Adult Services Council, Valley City, ND; Jacqueline Senger, North Central Planning Council, Devils Lake, ND; Peggy L. Morris, Spink County Public Transit & Senior Center, Redfield, SD; Ron Baumgart, River Cities Public Transit, Pierre, SD; Brenda Schweitzer, Arrow Public Transit, Lemmon, SD; Carol Wright, James River Transit, Jamestown, ND; and Barb Ballensky, Vermillion Public Transit, Vermillion, SD.

For the minutes from the DTA board meetings during the 2004 conference, go to the Members Only page at <http://www.dakotatransit.org/>.

Driver Changes with Arrow Transit

Brenda Schweitzer
Director, Arrow Transit

After 11 years as a driver with Arrow Transit, Eileen Schackow has moved with her family to Mandan, ND. Eileen was the in-town driver for Arrow's service. The community knew Eileen and her vehicle, and she knew their schedule, needs, families, etc. Eileen was a very reliable employee; she knew the system and her bus well. We wish the Schackows the best in their new home.



Nola Dietz (pictured) served Arrow as a part-time/split shift employee for five years. The opportunity to take Eileen's full-time position was welcomed by Nola and the riders are in good hands once again. Nola and her husband, Bob, are parents of four grown daughters, and are presently taking care of a three year old grandson while his mom is serving in Iraq.

With Nola leaving the split-shift, we were happy to be able to bring Pam Ploog on board. Pam's position involves transporting school kids, Head Start children, nutrition meals, providing noon-hour relief on a regular day, driving Sunday mornings and for our five regular out-of-town trips, as well as for any extra events that come up. We have three employees who rotate these shifts. The other two are Al Colgrove and Richard Pearson. Pam is married with two girls and two boys.

There are also drivers for the limited services in Bison and Faith. They are Teddi Carlson and Richard Collins.

Arrow Transit is proud of our drivers and the work they do for us.

**Look for vendor
commercials
in the next newsletter!**

Cutting Edge Transit

Gary Hegland
SURTC



The transit managers' job can become easier if some decisions can be based on research done by others. This report is brought to you with that thought in mind.

Are you struggling with the question: what is the appropriate software for my transit operation in terms of cost and capacity? You may also have questions about implementing new computer software. If you go to the website http://www.ndsu.edu/ndsu/ugpti/MPC_Pubs/html/MPC04-161/ you will find a Mountain-Plains Consortium report on low-cost software for rural paratransit agencies. The authors have done a great job assessing the computer software needs of small rural transit agencies. Their conclusion is that all agencies ranging in size from 700 to 17,000 trips per month can benefit from purchasing and installing computer software systems. If you would like a copy of the report please let someone at UGPTI or SURTC know and one will be mailed out to you.

I don't know how many of you function with a board of directors. Many nonprofit organizations in the state do. If you function with a board, how effective is it and when was the last time it conducted a self assessment? Transportation Cooperation Research Report # 104 entitled, "Public Transportation Board Effectiveness: A Self-Assessment Handbook" available at http://gulliver.trb.org/publications/tcrp/tcrp_rpt_104.pdf may just be the right solution. This is a transit board self-evaluation guide designed to help the board regularly examine its goals and objectives. It is written primarily for administrators who have been asked to help a transit board assess its effectiveness, or by board members who want to conduct a self-assessment survey of their board. It discusses how to implement board assessment and gives three levels of assessment depending on how detailed the desired results.

The General Accounting Office (GOA) has written still another report on the transportation of seniors. This one is entitled, "Transportation-Disadvantaged Seniors Efforts to Enhance Senior Mobility Could Benefit from Additional Guidance and Information" available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d04971.pdf>. This report says there are five federal departments that administer 15 programs key to addressing the mobility of seniors. It is written for the Honorable Larry E. Craig, Chairman, Special Committee on Aging, U.S. Senate. The report indicated that transportation service providers have done some things on their own such as increasing service efficiency, improving customer services, and leveraging available funds to enhance senior mobility. However, it also noted, that sometimes these practices are impeded by multiple reporting requirements and limited federal guidance. Check this report for the four recommendations to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.

James River Transit Director Selected to Study in South America

The transit director for Wells, Sheridan and Stutsman counties was selected for an international trip to study transit in Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador.

Carol Wright is executive director of James River Transit and Wells/Sheridan Transit headquartered in Jamestown. She left for the 16-day trip on Wednesday, Oct. 20, and was accompanied by a dozen other transit professionals from across the United States. Each participant on the tour was assigned a topic to study during the tour and will report findings through journal papers when they return.

The tour featured stops in Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and Sao Paulo in Brazil; Santiago in Chile and Quito in Argentina.

Wright has directed transit in the three counties for 10 years. As director of James River Senior Citizens Center,

Inc., she also oversees senior meal services and outreach in those counties as well. She was selected for the trip after being nominated by the North Dakota Department of Transportation and the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, part of North Dakota State University's Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute.



"Under Carol's direction, James River Transit has been an innovator in improving the mobility of area residents, particularly those with special needs," says Jill Hough, author of the nomination that came from NDSU. "We anticipate that she will return with new perspectives and ideas for providing transit to residents in the region."

The trip was coordinated by the Eno Transportation Foundation on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration. The foundation is designed to foster innovative thinking and unbiased discussion about transportation issues.

Calendar of Events

January 5-6, 2005
DTA Board of Directors Meeting
Fargo, ND

January 9-13, 2005
TRB 84th Annual Meeting
Washington, DC

March 6-8, 2005
TRF 46th Annual Forum
Washington, DC

Upcoming Training

Upcoming Training Sessions:
Dates are all "to be determined"

- Web Page Development
- Survey Development
- AND MORE!

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The **Dakota Transporter** is a North and South Dakota newsletter, geared toward the rural, small urban, and specialized transit industry, in keeping the DTAs transit providers up-to-date on the news and information from across the nation and the states.

If anyone has any news or items of interest they would like to share with us, please send it to the **Dakota Transporter**. We also welcome your comments about the newsletter.