

# TRANSIT LANE

Small Urban & Rural Transit Center  
Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute • North Dakota State University

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## Transit leaders meet at NDSU

Officials from several local, state, and national transit organizations gathered at NDSU on Sept. 10 for SURTC's annual Advisory Board meeting.

"This meeting is our opportunity each year to step back and ask our board members and clientele to provide feedback on what we're doing and offer ideas for what we should do next," said SURTC director Jill Hough. The 30 participants included state Department of Transportation officials and transit agency managers from North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota and Utah.

"Caught between booming ridership and ballooning fuel costs, transit managers who are members of the Advisory Board suggested a number of proposals for research and outreach efforts. Their comments and suggestions will help shape the center's agenda of activities for the coming year," Hough said.

"Transportation and transit are going to look very different in 5 to 10 years," noted Francis Ziegler, director of the NDDOT. He pointed out that drivers are choosing more fuel-efficient vehicles in response to environmental concerns, and increasing fuel costs are resulting in reduced fuel consumption. That means gas taxes may no

(Transit Leaders continued on page 2)



(L to R Front Row) Francis Ziegler, Jon Mileke, Jill Hough, Vincent Valdes, Lyn Hellegaard, Bruce Lindholm, Kathryn Harrington-Hughes, Susan Hendrickson; (L to R Back Row) Jim Miller, David Ripplinger, Gene Griffin, David Leftwich, Ron Baumgart, Karen Wolf-Branigin, Charles Dickson, Audrey Allums, Al Abeson, Lori Van Beek, Rob Padgette, Julie Bommelman, Jeremy Mattson, B. Leone Gibson, Marc Scott, Carol Wright, Del Peterson, Bill Thoms, Keven Anderson, Pam Ternes, Ryan Marshall, Bruce Fuchs, Jim Moench, Gary Hegland.

(Transit Leaders continued)

longer be the major source for transportation funding. Participants in the meeting cited several trends that are impacting transit in rural and small urban areas. Those include fuel costs, increased ridership, lagging public funding and an increase in the number of elderly.

“I can see how cutting edge a lot of this work is and how germane it is to transit across the country,” noted Vincent Valdes, associate administrator of the Federal Transit Administration’s Office of Research, Demonstration and Innovation in Washington, D.C. Valdes complimented the transit center on a study of how rural communities and small urban areas can better make use of diverse transit resources.

“We have to think of both the local perspective and the global perspective of what we do.”



Vincent Valdes

He also cited SURTC research on how increased fuel costs impact transportation on Indian reservations. “Those projects are directed at local issues but can have an impact on a much broader scale. We have to think of both the local perspective and the global perspective of what we do.”

Other guests included Charles Dickson of the Community Transportation Association of America, Rob Padgette of the American Public Transit Association, Karen Wolf-Branigin of Easter Seals Project ACTION and Francis Ziegler, director of the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

“Across the country we’re seeing lots of smaller systems with double digit growth in their ridership. Places where the economy is depressed and people are losing jobs are still seeing increases. That says a lot about mobility,” noted Padgette. “We need to say to our public officials, ‘We need help here.’” He noted that lawmakers, local officials and others are frequently surprised to find that transit fares seldom cover transit costs. “They don’t understand that it costs a lot less to subsidize transit and let a person age in place rather than put them in a nursing home, or to subsidize a ride to work for someone who might otherwise not be able to work.”



Rob Padgette

“Across the country we’re seeing lots of smaller systems with double digit growth in their ridership.”

“We’ve seen a 28 percent increase in ridership,” notes Julie Bommelman, transit administrator for the city of Fargo. “The publicity around that increase has been great, but people don’t realize that our costs have gone up much more than that.”

Several people at the meeting noted that with federal transportation legislation set to expire in 2009, the next federal transportation authorization will have a significant impact on how transit operations will be able to serve their clients.

“You can’t grow a business or an agency without investment,” noted Jim Moench of the North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium. “We need to be able to demonstrate the return on investment in transit, or at least the cost of not investing.”



Jim Moench

“You can’t grow a business or an agency without investment.”

“We have to get our constituency involved in the political process, or none of the items we talked about here will happen,” noted Bruce Fuchs, director of transit programs for the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

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## Region 8 FTA administrator visits MAT and SURTC

FTA Region 8 Administrator Terry Rosapep was in Fargo in September to visit Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Transit and SURTC.

Rosapep was in the area to attend the annual Dakota Transit Association annual conference in Watertown, SD. He made the trip to Fargo to learn more about SURTC and MAT. "He was very pleased to see resources we've been able to invest in research, training and education programs focused on small urban and rural transit," notes SURTC director Jill Hough.

Rosapep provides executive direction for FTA's planning, operating, and capital programs in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. During his career with FTA, he has directed activities in FTA's headquarters Office of Planning and Environment and Office of Program Management covering programs that included metropolitan and statewide planning; project management oversight for major transit capital investments; and transit safety and security.

## Have you used this resource...the National Center on Senior Transportation?



The National Center on Senior Transportation (NCST) is a valuable resource for transit or aging services providers interested in learning about the latest

developments in senior transportation.

Based in Washington, DC, the NCST is administered by Easter Seals, Inc. in partnership with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. Its mission is to increase transportation options for seniors and their caregivers through technical assistance, training, outreach, and research. In addition to free print and e-newsletters, the NCST regularly sponsors a variety of distance learning events, provides funding opportunities for small demonstration projects, and responds to numerous senior transportation-related inquiries. New in 2009 is the NCST-sponsored Senior Transportation Institute, scheduled for June 15-18 in Washington, DC. Additional information, including the on-line application

for this unique opportunity where senior services and transportation leaders meet to forge strong community partnerships, can be found at [www.seniortransportation.net](http://www.seniortransportation.net). For more information, contact the center at [NCST@easterseals.com](mailto:NCST@easterseals.com) or 866-528-NCST (6267).

## SURTC receives award from River Cities Transit

SURTC was recently recognized with a "Friend of River Cities Public Transit," by the transit agency in Pierre, SD.

The award was accepted on behalf of SURTC by training coordinator Gary Hegland at the River Cities Public Transit Christmas party. The event was attended by Sam Tidball, mayor of Fort Pierre and Laurie Gill, mayor of Pierre as well as a number of city commissioners, RCPT board members, city employees and members of the community. In presenting the award, RCPT executive director Ron Baumgart recapped some of collaboration between SURTC and RCPT. He specifically cited SURTC's work in helping the agency develop business and coordination plans, SURTC's training efforts, and the networking that has been facilitated by his participation on SURTC's Advisory Board.

## Paper published in Transportation Research Record

A SURTC research paper on the travel behavior of elderly women was recently published by the Transportation Research Record, a peer-reviewed journal of the Transportation Research Board.

Authors of "Exploring Travel Behavior of Elderly Women in Rural and Small Urban North Dakota, An Ecological Modeling Approach," were SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough, former SURTC researcher Dr. Xinyu Cao who is now at the University of Minnesota, and Dr. Susan Handy from the University of California Davis. The study examines the determinants of the travel behavior of elderly women and discusses how findings will have implications for public policy.

Transportation Research Record No. 2082 focuses on travel behavior analysis. The Transportation Research Board is part of the National Academy of Sciences.



# RESEARCH

## Research addresses transit's role in small urban sprawl



Del Peterson

Sprawl has become a growing concern for areas across the country. However, SURTC researcher Del Peterson is exploring an area that has received little attention: the effects of sprawl on small urban areas.

The research project, "Transit's Role in Small Urban Sprawl,"

was launched in July and is currently in the survey stage. The effort is funded by the USDOT's University Transportation Centers program. Peterson hopes that this project will provide concrete ways for small urban areas to address sprawl.

The project will include small urban communities in SURTC's service region. Transit agencies are being surveyed to provide Peterson with data about the current adaptations transit has made to accommodate sprawl in the area.

Peterson's research will hopefully determine steps that need to be taken by small urban transit providers to include the sprawl areas in their transit plan. The rising cost of fuel also will be considered in the development of the plans because of the impact it already has on existing transit programs.

The information collected through this survey process will aid in the development of case studies to be used in three to five test areas. The purpose of the case studies will be to gain insight into the small urban sprawl and the effects on surrounding areas. The one-year study will help small urban transportation providers and planners across the country improve transit service growth in their communities.

## Researchers evaluate travel demand by mode in rural areas

Over the next several months, SURTC researchers will be surveying residents in North Dakota and northwest and west central Minnesota to learn more about how they choose modes of transportation.

The survey will cover five different modes of transportation: automobile, bus, train, transit van, and air and will gather information on how often respondents use each of these modes for trips of 30 to 500 miles. The researchers will ask questions related to gas prices, travel distances, travel times, fares, service frequencies and the need for transfers. They will also gather demographic information and information on personal attitudes and preferences.

"With that information, we can estimate the likelihood that people would choose a given mode of transportation based on the price of gas, travel distance, personal characteristics and attitudes, service frequencies, and other factors," noted researcher Jeremy Mattson. "The results will provide some information regarding the need for different forms of transportation and how resources should be allocated to improve the intercity transportation system in the region."

SURTC affiliated faculty member William Thoms developed the initial idea for the research. He is assisting with the project along with SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough and researchers Del Peterson, Jeremy Mattson and David Ripplinger.



William Thoms

Peterson notes that higher fuels costs are causing many Americans to revisit when and how they travel. An increasing number of individuals are making fewer trips and changing how they make those trips.

"If you look at changes in travel behavior, we may need to re-evaluate how resources are allocated to highways, rail, air, and transit in rural areas," Peterson said. "We want to make the best use of limited resources to provide the level of mobility required for a vibrant economy and a high quality of life."

Analysis of the survey data is expected to be completed next fall, and information from the study will help transportation planners and policy makers evaluate transportation investment decisions.



## Study identifies disparity in portion of income spent on fuel



Jon Mielke

A SURTC study on the relative impact that rising fuel prices have on Native Americans supports calls for alternative transportation options, particularly transit, in areas with high Native American populations.

The study was conducted in response to an Oil Price

Information Service study that was reported in the *New York Times*. “In that study, there were no areas that had high populations of Native Americans,” noted researcher Jon Mielke. “There were also some ways that we saw to improve on the original study.” Mielke conducted the study with SURTC researchers Jeremy Mattson and Dave Ripplinger.

“Given the lack of transportation options other than personal vehicles, the distances involved and the low incomes in these counties, we found that people in Native American counties spend a significantly higher portion of their income on transportation,” Mielke said. “In one county, residents spent up to 30 percent of their income on vehicle fuel.”

“Although the percentage has declined with fuel prices, the differences between urban, high-income counties and rural, low-income counties are still there, and the problem will become more acute when higher fuel prices return,” Mielke said.

The study focused on 29 counties in the lower 48 states that have populations that are at least 25 percent Native American. It compared related data with national averages, 10 corresponding states, 12 major metropolitan areas, and five “hard hit” counties that were identified by the Oil Price Information Service.

“Transit usage has risen dramatically with rising fuel prices, and many service providers have responded with increased service offerings,” Mattson noted. “Rural areas, including Indian reservations, should not be overlooked regarding the need for new and expanded services to offset the negative impact of rising fuel prices.”

The information has been presented to the American Public Transportation Association, and Mielke also presented the study to the National Tribal Transportation

Conference. To view the study, go to [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org) and click on “research reports” in the drop-down menu under “resources.” The report title is “Assessing Impacts of Rising Fuel Prices on Rural Native Americans.”

## Study will assess impact of public transportation on access to health care

A new SURTC study will examine how access to public transportation influences access to health care in North Dakota.



Jeremy Mattson

“Access to transportation is a critically important aspect of health care use,” notes researcher Jeremy Mattson. “This especially true in places like North Dakota where individuals often have to travel long distances to access health care services.” The issue is compounded when a growing portion of residents in rural areas are older

adults who need may need increasing levels of health care services while their ability to obtain transportation may be limited.

A survey will be used to gather data on how distance from health care providers impacts individuals’ ability to access health care services. It will also collect information on how access to public transit can improve their ability to obtain health care. Mattson will identify areas that have a demand for more public transportation and will investigate ways in which transportation services could be enhanced.

“This study should help us identify areas of the state where there is the greatest need for improving access to health care,” Mattson says. “We’ll also develop recommendations for how transit agencies could improve access to health care. As state agencies and transit providers make decisions about how to direct resources, this information will help them address a critical need among a growing number of North Dakotans.”

The project is funded by the USDOT's University Transportation Centers program and is expected to be complete by the fall of 2009.



## Research identifies technology for coordination project



Dave Ripplinger

Technology will play a key role in an effort among transportation providers in southwest North Dakota to coordinate their transportation resources.

SURTC researcher David Ripplinger is assessing available technology and assembling a list of system requirements. The

work is part of an effort, called the Roughrider Travel Management Coordination Center, to implement an innovative, community transportation system in the region that features improved coordination and use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS). The goal of the project is to improve the efficiency of transportation systems in the region including K-12 student transportation, public transit systems, and human service transportation providers.

“The purpose of the center is to serve as the technological hub of a regional, coordinated transportation system that meets the mobility needs of individuals in southwest North Dakota,” Ripplinger says. “It would act as a mobility brokerage, matching riders with the appropriate service, and as an information clearinghouse, providing timely, accurate information.”

The initial phase of the project framed a vision for the effort. “Now we’re sketching things out and outlining the specific steps and technology that will be needed to realize that vision,” Ripplinger says. “While this is a new effort for the state, we can use a number of tools that the industry has developed to assist us. There are guides that outline the process of identifying and implementing technology.”

Once the “architecture” of underlying technology has been identified, the next step will be to develop an implementation plan for the region. “The visioning process was important in developing the architecture, and both the vision and the architecture will be instrumental in developing the implementation plan,” Ripplinger says.

SURTC’s portion of the project is expected to be complete by later this spring. Because of the potential to reduce costs, more fully utilize resources, and improve

mobility of residents in rural areas, there has been considerable interest in the project. The project working group includes members from the ND Department of Transportation and the ND Department of Public Instruction, as well as the Dickinson Public School District, the Dickinson City Council, and Elder Care, the local public transit provider.

## SURTC evaluates costs to ride or relocate

Rural areas are no stranger to the “aging tsunami” facing the United States in which more than 1 in 5 Americans soon will be 65 years old or older.

This growth in the population of elderly residents is posing public policy questions related to transit and other public services. Those questions take on special significance in rural areas where distances to services are greater, and the proportion of elderly is even larger.

“Public transportation provides freedom to much of the aging population who would otherwise be forced to give up their lifestyles,” SURTC researcher Del Peterson noted. “Critics of publicly funded transportation argue that many of the aging population would be better off relocating to larger communities where desired services are more readily available. Public transportation proponents believe that it is more desirable for aging Americans in rural areas to remain in their homes and utilize public transportation.”

Peterson says a new SURTC study will attempt to quantify the cost of riding transit in rural areas of North Dakota versus relocating to larger communities. Peterson is working with SURTC director Jill Hough and graduate student Marc Scott to review existing information associated with transit costs and the cost of moving to an assisted living center or a nursing home. They are drawing on the expertise of Pat Hansen. She is program director at South Central Adult Services, which provides transit services, and operates Bridgeview Estates, an assisted living facility for the Valley City area.

“We’ll be looking at the applicable costs of both options,” Peterson said. Transit costs may include capital costs, passenger fares, and operating costs. Relocation costs may include rent, realtor fees and intangible costs related to quality of life.



Finally the research will quantify the cost of riding transit versus relocating to the eight largest communities in North Dakota: Fargo, Bismarck, Grand Forks, Minot, Dickinson, Jamestown, Williston, and Devils Lake.

“Our research will help determine tradeoffs between riding and relocating and develop a framework to show at what point it is more beneficial to relocate versus ride,” Peterson said.

The research was undertaken at the suggestion of SURTC Advisory Board member Rob Padgette of the American Public Transit Association (APTA). Peterson hopes to have preliminary information to present to APTA in six months with the final report complete in a year. The USDOT’s University Transportation Centers program is sponsoring the research.

# TRAINING and OUTREACH

## SURTC launches principles of transit management program



Carol Wright

SURTC has developed a 3-day intensive training program for transit managers. The training focuses on topics that Carol Wright, SURTC’s associate director of training and outreach, wishes she would have known more about during her early years as a transit manager.

The purpose of the course is to provide new transit managers with enough basic information to “hit the ground running,” she says. Wright has conducted the course with SURTC training coordinator Gary Hegland and SURTC affiliate faculty member Dr. Jim Miller.

“The topics were areas that we deal with every day in our profession,” Laurie McGuire of James River Transit said. “The best part of the training was the wealth of information we were provided.”

Topics of the training include: human resource management; financial management; administration; operations and service design; procurement; vehicle and facility maintenance; safety, security and emergency management; and drug and alcohol program compliance. The training course is geared toward new transit managers and those who have been working in the profession for less than five years, but is valuable for anyone in transit management.

The cost of the training is deliberately kept low to help bring the training to many across the country. Each participant in the training course gets a comprehensive binder of resources and 4 additional CDs. The resources are collected from various sources with credit provided so participants can seek additional information.

“Excellent transit workshop notebook,” one attendee said, “with detailed information divided into appropriate sections that are easy to read.”

“After 7 years of management in transit, this is the best information I’ve ever received. I wish I knew this years ago,” said Dave Leone, transportation manager with the Fairbanks, AK, North Star Borough.

So far, the course has been offered in Fargo and Anchorage, AK. Alaska has asked for a repeat of the class in 2009. The course will also be offered to transit providers in North Dakota and South Dakota in 2009. Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Oregon and Utah have also expressed interest in the course. If you are interested in the training, contact SURTC for more information.

## Business plan workshop held

by Dr. Jim Miller, SURTC Affiliated Faculty



Jim Miller

“What will my transit system look like in five years? Will it offer more services, be smaller, or will it be around at all? Can we raise the funds needed to continue or expand service?” These are all questions that managers and staff from four South Dakota transit systems considered as part of a two-day business planning workshop Aug. 19-20 in Huron, SD. The workshop was conducted by Dr. Jim Miller and Gary Hegland from SURTC and co-sponsored by the SD Department of Transportation.

(Business Plan continued on page 8)



(Business Plan continued)

All South Dakota 5311 systems were invited to participate, but attendance was limited to four systems so that participants could receive extensive coaching on preparing a business plan. The four systems included: Brookings Area Transit Authority, Brookings; Palace Transit, Mitchell; People's Transit, Huron; and Prairie Hills Transit, Spearfish.

Prior to the workshop, SURTC assembled much of the data needed to prepare a plan including past operating and financial statistics reported to the state, demographic information from census statistics, and other background information included in the participants' 5311 operating grant applications. Each participant was given a notebook that included all of the data that SURTC had summarized, plus a detailed template to complete the plan. All templates, spreadsheets, other data, and PowerPoint presentations for the workshop were provided to the systems on a memory stick that they took with them after the workshop. After some overview presentations and discussions, each system began filling in the template on notebook computers.

One participant said, "I learned a lot and am very excited to start the process of our plan." Another said, "This program came just at the right time. We are planning to add service this fall, and we can use the techniques we learned at the workshop to help set our priorities." Especially because of the small class size and the informal setting for the workshop, the exchange of information between participants was as much a part of the learning experience as the formal presentations. At the end of the two days, all participants agreed that the workshop was valuable and gave them a great start on developing a business plan.

SURTC plans to continue offering training on preparation of business plans in several different formats. In the past, SURTC has offered half-day and one-day sessions to provide overviews of the business planning process, and it will continue to do so at the invitation of state associations, DOTs or other sponsors.

Three-day workshops similar to the one conducted in Huron will continue to be limited to small groups, but the training will add a set of checklists and folders that will help systems assemble key aspects of the plan and focus on key decision processes, in addition to preparing a complete written plan.

## Transit management plan nearly complete

Except for final modifications that may be requested by the Federal Transit Administration, the North Dakota State Transit Management Plan is complete.

The plan reflects state and federal requirements for transit agencies and for the use of public funds designated for transit. The plan contains the most current public transit program information for the state. It also contains the policies and procedures used by the North Dakota Department of Transportation in administering various federal and state transit program funds available for supporting and improving public transit services in North Dakota.

Earlier, SURTC had consolidated and updated various funding applications and instructions, noted Carol Wright, SURTC associate director for training and outreach. SURTC also had worked with the NDDOT to update all of the printed federal regulations and requirements. "We took what had been done before and molded it into one cohesive plan."

## CTAA exec's address is a DTA highlight



Dale Marsico

If transit agencies in the region are no closer to gaining greater reimbursement from Medicaid, they at least have a better understanding of the issue thanks to a presentation at the Dakota Transit Association Fall Conference in Watertown, SD.

Dale Marsico, executive director of the Community Transportation Association of America, presented "Medicaid: A Brief History and Its Role in Community Transportation." Marsico outlined development of social programs including Medicaid and their implications for transit. He also described how transit and mobility have changed over the years.

Currently, some federal law and court rulings say that Medicaid must pay for transportation for patients who can't afford it. In practice, however, Medicaid pays only a small portion of the transportation cost.



“It makes much more sense to provide transportation to and from medical care for small medical issues and preventative care, than to restrict those patients from reaching medical services because they can’t afford transit and then pay for emergency services and extensive care when small concerns become critical,” noted Gary Hegland, training coordinator for SURTC and executive director for DTA. “Unfortunately, Medicaid doesn’t see it that way.”

“Right now, it seems that transit providers and Medicaid are a long way apart on this issue,” Hegland said. “At SURTC and DTA, we want to keep talking about this issue and provide education that may facilitate some areas of compromise.”

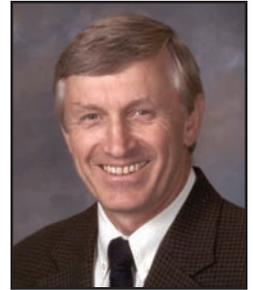
That was Marsico’s point as well. He urged transit providers to work with their riders to voice their concerns to Medicaid administrators and medical administrators and to educate them on the value of high-quality transportation options. “Remember that the riders or users have voices as well as needs,” he said.

Other highlights of the DTA conference included:

- Keynote speaker Terry Rosapep, FTA Region 8 administrator, discussing the state of transit.
- Awards to honor outstanding drivers, dispatchers, innovators, friends of transit and those who go above and beyond in their service to transit.
- A Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) train-the-trainer class for 21 drivers and operators from North Dakota, South Dakota and neighboring states.
- The 2008 DTA Rodeo for drivers to highlight and hone their skills.
- The installation of Barb Cline as DTA President. Cline is the administrator of Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish, SD. Sandra Bohrer, director of the City of Hazen, ND, transit program, became a new board member.
- Presentations and training to enhance skills of transit employees. Topics ranged from response to community emergencies to marketing.

## **SURTC introduces state-of-the-art technology to trainings**

The audience response system, TurningPoint, is the newest technology used by SURTC in trainings. This technology allows the instructor to ask questions in PowerPoint and receive an almost instant response from the entire audience.



Gary Hegland

SURTC uses this tool in a variety of ways including: surveying the audience on an activity, checking the retention of information and generating discussion during class. The participants remain anonymous, allowing them to feel comfortable answering the questions honestly without fear of embarrassment in case of an incorrect response.

TurningPoint works with the Microsoft Office Suite to give real time data that can be used to improve presentations and increase audience involvement. SURTC currently has 42 transponders that it has used for more than a year at trainings all across the country.

“Class participants are intrigued and engaged by the technology,” said Gary Hegland, SURTC outreach and training coordinator. They say that the transponders help them stay focused.”

## **SURTC trains more than 400**

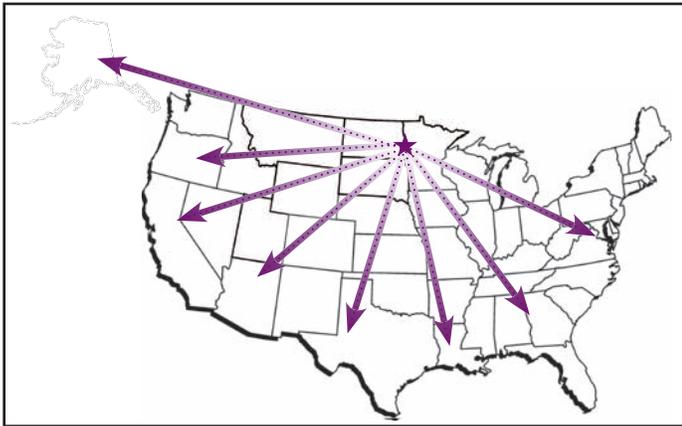
This fall, SURTC trainers have attended numerous conferences across the nation to teach a variety of transit related subjects.

### **Dakota Transit Association conference**

The fall DTA conference and Rodeo took place in Watertown, SD, Sept. 19-24. This conference had an attendance of 73 people and 24 vendors, the most the conference has ever seen. The conference also had a large turnout for the Rodeo competition. The North and South Dakota Rodeo winners will compete in the National Bus Rodeo in Providence, RI in June. Gary Hegland is the executive director of DTA and along with the DTA board of directors is directly responsible for the conference and bus Rodeo planning. Hegland also taught a seminar course, “Techniques for Creating a Positive Learning Environment.” This train-the-trainer



workshop provides techniques for teaching adult learners by using a variety of teaching skills.



### Colorado conference

Carol Wright attended the CASTA-CDOT (Colorado Association of Transit Agencies – Colorado Department of Transportation) fall conference Sept. 22-25 at the Copper Mountain Conference Center. Wright’s half-day presentation “Safety, Security and Emergency Management for Rural Transit Operations” covered various aspects of developing and implementing an emergency management program. She also presented “Finding Coordination Partners and Breaking Down Barriers” which addressed mobility management issues at the local level. SURTC also participated in the vendor show at the conference.

### Minnesota conference

The Minnesota Public Transit conference was held Sept. 29 - Oct. 1 at the St. Paul River Center. Gary Hegland is now utilizing Minnesota’s Maltreatment Awareness for Transit Drivers program for training bus drivers in North Dakota and South Dakota. The program was developed by Minnesota RTAP and MNDOT.

### Wyoming conference

The annual WYTrans conference took place in Jackson Hole Oct. 1-3. Gary Hegland presented a 4-hour class on risk management for transit operators. The conference focused on all aspects of risk assessment in transit operations.

### Alaska conference

Gary Hegland and Carol Wright presented four workshops at the Alaska conference, “The Future of Community Transit in Alaska,” in Anchorage Oct. 13-15. Hegland presented “Performance Evaluation for Small

Transit Systems.” He also presented “Conducting an Accident Investigation” as part of a panel session with Joey Hogan from MV transit in Anchorage. Wright presented “Fundraising and In-Kind Support” as a part of a panel session with Kelly Shawn of CTAA. She also presented “Developing and Using Financial Plans for Public Transit Operations.” In addition, SURTC had a booth at the vendor show and participated in a discussion with the Alaska DOT and transit providers on transit coordination in the state.

### Iowa conference

Carol Wright attended the Iowa Public Transportation Association Fall Conference in Coralville, IA, Nov. 3-5. Wright’s full-day seminar addressed vehicle and facility maintenance. The larger transit systems also invited their maintenance managers to attend the session. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Iowa Public Transit Association and the Iowa Department of Transportation. SURTC also had a vendor booth at the conference.

## SURTC’s website tallies impressive stats

In the last half of 2008, the SURTC website was visited nearly 4,600 times with guests viewing more than 13,000 pages. Visitors came from as many as 65 different countries including the United Kingdom, India, Australia, and New Zealand. In the United States, the most traffic to the site came from North Dakota, California, Minnesota and South Dakota.

“We’ve invested significant resources in our website as a means of outreach,” notes SURTC director Jill Hough. “The Web helps us facilitate information exchange and is an effective means of sharing our research and expertise. These statistics indicate that we’re achieving those goals.”

SURTC’s Web address is [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org).



# EDUCATION

## Student wins APTF scholarship

SURTC graduate research assistant Marc Scott was awarded a 2008 American Public Transportation Foundation Scholarship.

The foundation awards scholarships to increase and retain the number of young professionals entering the public transportation field as a career in order to sustain growth and improvement throughout the industry. The award was presented at the 20th Anniversary Scholarship Awards Program in October held in conjunction with the American Public Transportation Association Annual Meeting and International Expo. The American Public Transportation Foundation is the charitable affiliate of the American Public Transportation Association.

Scott is one of 22 students selected for the honor. He is a 4.0 student, pursuing a doctorate in transportation and logistics. Dr. Jill Hough nominated Scott for the scholarship.



Pictured (L. to R.) are transit consultant, Robert Prince Jr., Marc Scott, Jill Hough, and APTA president, Bill Millar.

## Transit addressed in weekly seminar series

SURTC students and staff participated in the 2008 fall semester transportation seminar series sponsored by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute.

The series of 13 weekly seminars focused on a variety of important issues in transportation research, policy and applications as well as other relevant topics. SURTC presenters included Carol Wright, Dave Ripplinger, Jeremy Mattson, Natalie Easterday, and Marc Scott.

Because the students registered for the seminar series are graduate students who are required to do a fair amount of writing, Carol Wright, SURTC associate director of training and outreach, began the series with an editing presentation, "Write – Edit – Rewrite."

Dave Ripplinger, associate research fellow, presented two seminars. The first, "Longitudinal Analysis of Change in the Behavior and Attitudes of College Undergraduates Toward Public Transportation: First and Second Wave Findings" pointed out that bus ridership on campus by those surveyed increased from 33% during their freshman year to 45% during their sophomore year.

Ripplinger's second seminar was presented with Jeremy Mattson, associate research fellow. Ripplinger and Mattson presented on conducting a literature review.

Natalie Easterday is a recent graduate of the Emergency Management master's program at NDSU. As a graduate student, Easterday worked with SURTC. She is currently working as a Regional Emergency Planner for Hampton Roads in Virginia. Her seminar focused on community preparedness and planning related to the use of public transportation in emergency evacuations.

Marc Scott is pursuing his Ph.D. in Transportation and Logistics at NDSU. Scott discussed the "TARC Experience." The Transit Authority of River City (TARC) is a public transportation provider in Louisville, KY. TARC provides transit service to five counties through 52 routes. Scott had the opportunity to intern at the TARC planning department this past summer.

(Seminar Series continued on page 12)



(Seminar Series continued)

Gene Griffin, director of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, presented the “Role and Importance of Mobility in our Socio-Economic System.” Griffin’s presentation outlined the importance of mobility to our everyday lives and economy.



Gene Griffin

## Transit class shifts focus

The NDSU graduate course in transit has been restructured for the spring semester.

As often as possible, each of the weekly three-hour class periods will feature a theoretical section, a guest lecture from a professional in the transit industry, as well as a student seminar. “The guest lecturers will focus on how that theory applies in the field,” noted SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough, instructor for the course.

TL 786: “Public Transportation” will continue to be taught on campus and via the Transportation Learning Network, an interactive network that makes the course available to students at universities across the country. The course is sponsored by SURTC through the USDOT’s University Transportation Centers program.

Bob Prince, a consultant and former manager of the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, Boston’s transit system, has been scheduled as a guest lecturer. Prince recently advised President Barack Obama’s transition team on transit issues. Other scheduled lecturers include SURTC associate director Carol Wright and former Easter Seals Project ACTION director Al Abeson. Invited speakers include Vincent Valdez, FTA associate administrator for Research; Bill Millar, president of the American Public Transportation Association; Jim Gilmour, city planner for Fargo, and Jeanne Krieg from Eastern Contra Costa Transit in California.



Bob Prince

## SURTC student gains transit expertise as intern

Marc Scott, a Ph.D. student in Transportation and Logistics at North Dakota State University, gained a wealth of hands-on experience as an intern at the Transit Authority of River City in Louisville, KY, during the summer of 2008.

He was placed in the intern position because of outreach activities conducted by the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center (SURTC) at NDSU. Through those activities, SURTC staff had developed a working relationship with the Transit Authority of River City.

In Louisville, Scott worked on finance issues for the agency, developing spreadsheet models, conducting investment analysis of various fleet purchase options, and developing reports and white papers for staff and administration. He also assisted with public meetings focused on proposed fee increases and service charges. The meetings ranged from a session with Louisville’s mayor and a presentation to the Louisville Metropolitan Council to one-on-one visits with transit riders.

A study of potential public-private partnerships was also part of Scott’s experience. In addition, he spent time with the agency’s marketing department to learn how a transit agency communicates with its clients and helped with a ridership analysis to determine how well those clients’ needs are being met.

“I was fortunate to be introduced to a very broad spectrum of transit issues and experiences,” Scott says.

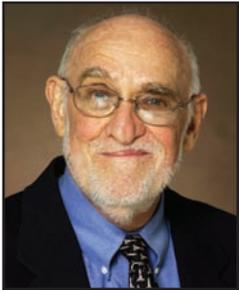
Back at NDSU, Scott is an enthusiastic student of transit, shifting his Ph.D. focus from freight mobility to transit issues. As a graduate assistant, Scott assists with SURTC research.

“Our goal in having students at SURTC is to expose them to transit and help them become tomorrow’s leaders in the transit field,” notes SURTC director Jill Hough. “With Marc’s internship in Louisville, we were also able to help bridge the gap between research and issues challenging the industry. Marc now has a perspective that he would never have gained only at the university, and that perspective enriches our work.”



# STAFF

## Former Project ACTION director Abeson joins SURTC



Al Abeson

Dr. Al Abeson, who retired in October 2007 as director of Easter Seals Project ACTION, has joined SURTC as an affiliate faculty member.

Abeson primarily will assist with SURTC outreach and training programs related to serving individuals with disabilities or special needs. He will also be involved in research projects that focus on providing transit to the disabled. Affiliated faculty members are individuals who are qualified to teach or serve on the committees of graduate students. They are often faculty in other departments or universities or have specialized knowledge and experience.

While at Project ACTION, Abeson served on SURTC's Advisory Board. He was also the principal investigator for the National Center on Senior Transportation based at Easter Seals. During his career he has worked extensively with many national transportation groups, disability organizations and human service organizations. Before joining Project ACTION in 2002, he spent 15 years as the executive director of The Arc (formerly known as The Association for Retarded Citizens) of the United States. With Easter Seals, The Arc and The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), he worked to advance transportation, education and other opportunities for children and adults with disabilities through improved public policy.

Abeson also served for a number of years as a member and Chairman of the City Council-appointed Special Transit Advisory Board in Arlington, TX, providing oversight of the system and policy guidance to the Council. He holds master's and doctoral degrees in special education administration from Columbia University. He earned a B.S. from Ohio State University.

"SURTC is delighted to have Al as an affiliated faculty member and trainer," noted SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough.

## Hough named to APTA workforce panel



Jill Hough

SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough has been named to the American Public Transportation Association's Workforce Development Blue Ribbon Panel. The panel's first meeting was in early December in New York City.

The one-year panel, representing public and private sectors of the public transportation industry, will review previous research and recommendations on workforce development and identify gaps, opportunities, programs and services geared to ensuring a viable workforce for the future. "A qualified, competent workforce is essential to the success of transit operations across the country," Hough notes. "This industry-wide effort will help address this challenge for the future. While workforce development is a need across the industry, I hope to bring forward the key concerns of rural and small urban systems as well as represent higher education." Hough will serve as chair of the panel's higher education working group.

## Leary named to SURTC Advisory Board



Mary Leary

Dr. Mary Leary of Easter Seals Project ACTION was named to the SURTC Advisory Board. Leary is senior director of Project ACTION & Transportation Initiatives. She joined Easter Seals in November 2007 after the retirement of Al Abeson who previously represented Project ACTION on the board.

Leary leads Easter Seals Project ACTION, the National Center on Senior Transportation and other transportation and mobility initiatives. She manages staff and represents the projects as a liaison to funding agencies, government, disability, aging and transportation interests, and other stakeholders on transportation activities. Before joining Easter Seals, she held a number of roles at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration on Aging, including those of Special Assistant to

(Leary continued on page 14)



(Leary continued)

the Assistant Secretary for Aging. She managed and developed program evaluation initiatives, and furthered transportation and mobility needs of human services populations both within the department and across federal agencies with the United We Ride initiative. She has served on a number of advisory committees and has been an advocate and public speaker in the field of human services transportation.

## **SURTC staff members attend conference in Omaha**

Most of SURTC's staff relocated to Omaha, NE, Oct. 18-22 for the 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. Faculty, staff and students gave presentations and facilitated sessions during the conference.

- David Ripplinger moderated a breakout session, "Technology Tools for Rural System Management" focusing on the use of technology in rural transit systems in Montana, Kansas and Minnesota. Ripplinger also presented information on NDinfo.org, an electronic clearinghouse of mobility-related information, in the session, "Travel Information for Rural Customers."
- Jeremy Mattson presented "Effects of Rising Fuel Prices on Bus Ridership for Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems" as part of the session on rising fuel costs and its impact on all areas of transit.
- Gary Hegland facilitated a breakfast roundtable discussion on "Hot Topics for New Members." This session provided an opportunity for new members of the transit industry to ask questions and get answers. Hegland also moderated "Strategies for Meeting Safety and Security Challenges in Community Transportation," which focused on what transit operators are doing to prepare for emergencies.
- Jill Hough moderated "New Directions in Rural Transit: Student Paper Competition Winners," a session featuring award-winning papers by students. Hough also moderated "Mobility and Emerging Transportation Needs of Seniors," a session focusing on the growing number of people over 65 in the United States and their impact on transportation services.
- Al Abeson, affiliated faculty member, also participated in "Mobility and Emerging Transportation Needs of Seniors" with his presentation "The Aging Tsunami."



SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough moderated a session featuring student paper competition winners at the National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. She is pictured (l. to r.) with Craig Yannes from the University of Connecticut, Marc Scott from North Dakota State University, and Chung-Jen Hsu from the University of Nebraska.

- SURTC student Marc Scott presented his award-winning paper, "Using Third Party Concept to Design Innovative Services to Foster Mobility and Access in Rural Areas through Partnership and Coordination." His second-place paper addressed using outsourcing concepts and coordination to improve the cost effectiveness of programs and services. He received a \$500 award and was reimbursed for conference registration fees and travel expenses.
- Jon Mielke was part of the breakout session "Cool Tribal Transit Efforts," where he presented a case study of the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation needs assessment and program planning.
- Carol Wright moderated the session "Specialized Medical Transportation in Rural Communities" which focused on specialized medical trips necessary in rural communities and unique ways communities can address this challenge. This panel featured Pat Hansen, director of South Central Adult Services in Valley City, ND. She spoke on "Community Partnerships for Innovative Medical Transportation in Rural North Dakota."
- Del Peterson attended the conference as a participant and gained valuable information in various sessions that he will apply to his current research.
- Lyn Hellegaard, coordinator of the Montana Transit Association and a member of the SURTC Advisory Board, moderated a session on the transit needs of veterans. She also presented "Breaching Barriers to Ambulatory and Non-Ambulatory Veterans Transportation."



The conference was hosted by the Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers and sponsored by the Transportation Research Board and the Federal Transit Administration.

SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough was selected to chair the 2010 Conference in Burlington, VT.

### **Hough presents paper at conference on impact of demographics on transportation**

SURTC director Jill Hough presented a paper at the “Impact of Changing Demographics on the Transportation System” conference in Washington, D.C. in October.

Her paper, “Relative Desired Mobility of Elderly Women Living in Rural and Small Urban Locations in North Dakota,” was one of several to address the impact the aging population has on transportation needs. The conference, organized by the Transportation Research Board, was designed to encourage interaction between university researchers and transportation professionals in government and the private sector. Papers at the two-day conference also addressed immigration, changing racial and ethnic populations, and gender differences. The Transportation Research Board is a part of the National Research Council.

The paper was based on Hough’s doctoral research on the mobility of elderly women in rural North Dakota. “The

opportunity to participate in this conference was very fortunate,” Hough notes. “It shows that our research focuses on issues that are important on a national level. I was also able to convey how demographic shifts may impact mobility needs in small urban and rural areas.”

### **SURTC research presented at TRB**

Several SURTC researchers participated in the Transportation Research Board's (TRB) 88th Annual Meeting Jan. 13-17 in Washington, D.C. The meeting brought together more than 10,000 policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and academic institutions for a comprehensive look at all modes of transportation. The meeting offered more than 3,000 presentations in nearly 600 sessions. The TRB is a part of the National Academies of Science.

Dr. Jill Hough, director of UGPTI’s Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, participated in a roundtable discussion of rural public and intercity bus transportation. Her presentation was titled, “Human Services and Human Resources.” Jeremy Mattson presented a paper, “Effect of Gasoline Prices on Bus Ridership for Small Urban Transit Systems of the Upper Midwest and Mountain Region.” David Ripplinger presented “Frontier Mobility: Providing General Public Paratransit on the Northern Great Plains.” His presentation was part of a panel discussion on public demand-response transportation.

## **Events Calendar**

TRF 2009 Annual Forum	March 16-18, 2009 • Portland, OR
DTA Multi-State Coordination Summit	April 21-22, 2009 • Fort Pierre, SD
APTA 2009 Bus & Paratransit Conference/ International Bus Rodeo	May 1-6, 2009 • Seattle, WA
CTAA EXPO 2009	May 31- June 5, 2009 • Providence, RI
ITSA 2009 Annual Meeting & Exposition	June 1-3, 2009 • National Harbor, MD
ITSA 2009 National Rural ITS Conference	August 23-27, 2009 • Seaside, OR
DTA 2009 Fall Conference & Rodeo	September 19-23, 2009 • Fargo, ND
APTA 2009 Annual Meeting	October 4-7, 2009 • Orlando, FL

Please check [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org) for updates

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