

# TRANSIT LANE

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

## Brief

Vol. 8 Issue 2

Published quarterly

Fall 2010

## Regional Coordination Study Entering Option Identification Phase

SURTC has begun identifying options for two regional coordinated public transportation systems in North Dakota. The purpose of the Public Transit Regional Coordination Project is to identify ways that public transportation can be better coordinated to improve mobility for residents and assure that the limited federal and state money directed at transit is spent most efficiently. In earlier phases of the project, SURTC collected transit agency service information, conducted eight public input meetings and numerous transit agency director interviews, and identified best practices from regional coordination efforts in other parts of the country.

The option identification phase of this study will identify alternatives for the organizational framework and describe standards for public transportation providers within each regional system.

These alternatives will form the basis for preliminary findings and recommendations that will be provided to the North Dakota Department of Transportation in December prior to the 2011 legislative session.

Public information meetings will be held at locations in south central and west central North Dakota in November to present the preliminary findings.

(Coordination Study continued on page 4)



*South Central Transit Network*

### Inside this issue:

Message from the Director	2
Training Update	2
Transit Class Offered	2
Events Calendar	2
Research to Identify Full Benefits of Transit	3
Transit Ridership and the Built Environment	3
Using Technology in Transit Planning	3

### Special points of interest:

- SURTC debuts Transit Lane Brief
- Study identifies options for regional coordination
- U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood visits North Dakota to discuss transportation reauthorization
- New research on the full benefits of transit and the impacts of the built environment on ridership

## U.S. Secretary of Transportation Visits North Dakota

U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood visited North Dakota as part of the U.S. DOT's Transportation Reauthorization Outreach Tour. The event was part of a series of six meetings across the country that brought together federal, state, and local officials, as well as transportation providers, users, and other

stakeholders, to discuss the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization. SURTC director Jill Hough, Ph.D., was invited to provide testimony during the event on the importance of transit and mobility to the livability of rural areas. She noted that a single approach to improving livability is not likely to fit all situations.

(Reauthorization Tour continued on page 4)



*U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood*



[www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org)

## Message from the Director

Thank you for taking the time to read our new *Transit Lane Brief*. It has always been of high importance to SURTC to stay in contact with you regarding our research, education, and training for the transit industry. To better facilitate information exchange, we are moving to a more frequent condensed version of our newsletter, so expect to hear from us quarterly. In the meantime, please visit our website for more details on our work and our blog for industry updates. Don't hesitate to contact us directly regarding any research or training needs that you may have. We look forward to continually serving you and working to advance the public transportation industry. Again, thank you for reading this brief and for your continued support.



Jill Hough, PhD

## Training Update

This year has been very exciting as SURTC staff have delivered training in 12 states, six of which we visited on multiple occasions. We once again are covering the United States from Alaska to Texas and California to North Carolina. The one common thread we find in our travels is the genuine commitment to public transit and the nice people we meet everywhere we go!



Business Plan Training

Popular training programs range from multiple day classes such as *Principles of Transit Management* and *Business Plan Development* to individual offerings such as the *Implementing Rural Technology* class developed by David Ripplinger in partnership with NTI. Other topics include diversity, ethics, cost allocation, financial management, working with local governments, performance measures, human resources, tribal transit, and motivational leadership. A complete list of training topics and brief descriptions can be found on SURTC's webpage at [www.surtc.org/training](http://www.surtc.org/training).

SURTC is building on the success of its training in 2010 as it looks forward to the coming year. Many of you have asked for 2011 dates, so the calendar is now "open" and ready for

### Education: Transit Class Offered Spring Semester

Individuals across the country will have the opportunity to study the transit industry in a course taught by Dr. Jill Hough during the 2011 spring semester. This course, titled "Public Transportation," will be offered as part of the Transportation Leadership Graduate Certificate Program (TLGC). TLGC is a web-based distance learning program. For more information, go to the program's website at [www.transleader.org](http://www.transleader.org).

booking. The dates fill quickly, so we would encourage you to plan ahead. If you are interested in having SURTC provide training, please contact Carol Wright at 701.231.8231 or by email at [carol.wright@ndsu.edu](mailto:carol.wright@ndsu.edu).

## Events Calendar

TRB—19th Annual Conference on Rural Public & Intercity Bus Transportation

Oct. 24-27, 2010 • Burlington, VT

Colorado TTAP—13th Annual National Tribal Transportation Conference

Nov. 15-18, 2010 • Albuquerque, NM

TRB—90th Annual Meeting

Jan. 23-27, 2011 • Washington, DC

TRF—2011 Annual Forum

Mar. 10-12, 2011 • Long Beach, CA

APTA—2011 International Bus Rodeo

May 20-24, 2011 • Memphis, TN

APTA—2011 Bus & Paratransit Conference

May 22-25, 2011 • Memphis, TN

CTAA—2011 EXPO

June 5-11, 2011 • Indianapolis, IN

# SURTC Research to Identify the Full Benefits of Transit

Decision-makers will have a new tool to assist them in determining transit support levels using research being conducted at SURTC. Due to adverse economic conditions, many transit agencies have seen service reductions and fare increases in recent years. While these changes have had a noticeable impact on agency budgets, ridership, and riders' pocketbooks, the impacts to a community from reduced service and higher fares are far greater. A better understanding of the results of service and fare changes is needed when making

funding decisions.

SURTC's research will estimate both the financial and non-financial costs of changes in service and fares in small urbanized areas. Rider waiting time, congestion, environmental effects, and other social impacts will be considered in the study.

The project is being funded by the Mountain-Plains Consortium and the North Dakota Department of Transportation. For more information, contact researchers David Ripplinger at (701) 231-5265 or

A better understanding of the results of service and fare changes is needed when making funding decisions.

[david.ripplinger@ndsu.edu](mailto:david.ripplinger@ndsu.edu) or Jeremy Mattson at (701) 231-5496 or [jeremy.w.mattson@ndsu.edu](mailto:jeremy.w.mattson@ndsu.edu).

## Transit Ridership and Livability within the Built Environment

SURTC, in conjunction with the City of Fargo, has begun studying how the Fargo-Moorhead built environment affects transit ridership. Population density, land use mix, bus stop safety, and the functionality of the local transportation system are all aspects of the built environment that are thought to influence ridership. The topic has been studied greatly in many large urban areas but much less so within a small urban setting.

This study, which is being led by researcher Del Peterson, will attempt

to determine the degree to which factors such as residential density, land use mix, and the location and



*Fargo-Moorhead Metro Area  
Transit Bus*

design of bus stops influence transit ridership in Fargo-Moorhead. "There is mounting evidence that the quality of the built environment influences many key topics of concern to federal, state, and local policy makers, including neighborhood livability and safety, air pollution, traffic congestion, and transit use, among others," Peterson says.

For more information, contact Del Peterson at (701) 231-5908 or [del.peterson@ndsu.edu](mailto:del.peterson@ndsu.edu).

## Project Investigating the Benefits of Technology in Transit Planning

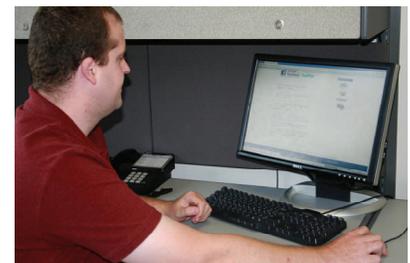
Smartphones and Facebook will be evaluated as tools to improve transit planning as part of a research project in the Fargo-Moorhead area being conducted by SURTC.

The project is part of a nationwide effort by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to explore innovative ways to improve public participation in transportation planning. The project will help Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Transit

use social networking sites, blogs, and other techniques to solicit input on transit. David Ripplinger, associate research fellow at SURTC, is leading the research effort.

Project news and findings are being made available online at the project's website: [www.surtc.org/ptpproject](http://www.surtc.org/ptpproject). Updates will be made throughout the course of the project so that anyone with an interest in transit planning and technology can follow

developments as they occur.



*David Ripplinger*



Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute  
NDSU Dept. 2880  
PO Box 6050  
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

---

Non Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage

**Paid**

Permit No. 818  
Fargo, N.D.

---

### **(Coordination Study continued)**

The Public Transit Regional Coordination Pilot Projects were prescribed by the 2009 North Dakota Legislature. The legislation required that two regional coordination efforts be conducted—one in a region that does not have a city greater than 35,000 residents and one in a region with a city with a population greater than 35,000. The south central region, which includes Jamestown and Valley City, and the west central region, which includes Bismarck and Mandan, were selected for the study.

The project is being led by Jon Mielke, associate research fellow, and Carol Wright, associate director of training and outreach, and is being overseen by a technical advisory committee

and two regional steering committees. The project website, which contains background information on the project, project documents, and archived public input meetings, is located at [www.surtc.org/regionalcoordination](http://www.surtc.org/regionalcoordination).

For more information on the project contact Jon Mielke at (701) 328-9865 or [jon.mielke@ndsu.edu](mailto:jon.mielke@ndsu.edu) or Carol Wright at (701) 231-8231 or [carol.wright@ndsu.edu](mailto:carol.wright@ndsu.edu).

---

### **(Reauthorization Tour continued)**

In particular, Hough emphasized the mobility needs of the elderly population in rural areas and the importance of meeting those needs in creating livable rural communities. During her testimony, she cited

several examples of the dramatic impact that rural transportation systems have made in the lives of elderly residents in North Dakota. She also emphasized the need for continued research training and education focused on the mobility needs of individuals, particularly the elderly, living in rural areas. The event also featured a panel discussion of state department of transportation directors from North Dakota, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Gene Griffin, director of SURTC's parent organization, the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, moderated that session. Senator Kent Conrad, Senator Byron Dorgan, Governor John Hoeven, and Congressman Earl Pomeroy also provided comments on the state's transportation needs.