

The Transit Lane

Small Urban & Rural Transit Center • North Dakota State University
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FTA associate administrator attends SURTC steering committee meeting at NDSU

Economics of transit systems in rural areas, affordable insurance, coordination among systems and agencies, and funding rules that make sense for small communities were some of the concerns voiced by members of the SURTC steering committee during the group's annual meeting Sept. 24 at NDSU.

On hand for the meeting were committee members Tony Kouneski, American Public Transportation Association; Chris Zeilinger, Community Transportation Association of America; Bruce Fuchs, North Dakota Department of Transportation; Julia Bommelmann, Metropolitan Area Transit, Fargo; Peggy Morris, Dakota Transit Association; Bruce Lindholm, South Dakota Department of Transportation; Lyn Hellegard, Montana Transit Association; Rich Douglas, Wyoming Department of Transportation; Lori VanBeek, Moorhead, Minn., Transit; and Keven Anderson, Minnesota Department of Transportation.

Opening the session was David Sprynczynatyk, director of the North Dakota DOT. He commented

on the serious challenges facing mobility. The biggest challenges, he said, are not knowing what will happen in the next 10 to 20 years, and how to put the best transit system in place. There is a need for more rural transit, he said, including providing service to an aging population, many of whom want to stay in their home towns in rural areas. The state has a good system, with 36 transit systems in place, but needs to do more, he said. Local authorities need help to efficiently use available resources to serve people in their jurisdictions. He cited SURTC as a resource, providing professionals and students offering expertise in helping systems serve neighboring counties by overcoming jurisdiction barriers.

UGPTI director Gene Griffin pointed out that mobility is essential to quality of life but it does not always receive a high level of public attention. Public transportation is becoming recognized as a vital part of providing mobility to citizens, he said.

An outlook from the federal government perspective was presented by Barbara Sisson, associate administrator of the Federal Transportation Administration. She



Barbara Sisson, FTA Associate Administrator

said that proposed reauthorization legislation offers transit systems the opportunity to enhance coordination among local, state, federal and other agencies working with transportation issues. Proposed legislation also offers increased funding for rural transit, with the ability to obtain funds to start new transit systems, increase planning, and encourage private sector participation in public transportation. Incentive programs for transit systems should provide encouragement for services

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beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Tony Kouneski of the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) pointed out that his group is an advocacy organization representing transportation interests in Washington. APTA has an active program for small urban and rural transit operators, seeking increased funding and a means to replace vehicles. Its strategic plan for small operators is to provide more resources and technical supports, develop programs to grow ridership, and help small operators build capabilities.

Chris Zeilinger of the Community Transportation Association of America listed some of the issues facing transit systems including working across jurisdictional boundaries, security and safety plans that make sense in rural areas, vehicle design, and appropriate training and professional development, especially in light of the growing number of young people using transit in communities.

Jill Hough presented an overview of SURTC projects, including studies on transportation of the disadvantaged; campus transit studies involving NDSU, Minnesota State University-Moorhead and Concordia College; and analysis of census data to show demographics related to transit planning. SURTC is involved in North Dakota's Statewide Mobility Plan, collecting information on transit services, creating a transit Website, and identifying potential application of ITS.

Hough described projects underway, including work on the North Dakota statewide mobility plan, demographic analysis, non-profit organizations in public transportation, transit best practices manual, coordinated transportation, the James River Transit study, and an information technology tool kit for transit providers, and also reported on education and training efforts.

Steering committee members shared information from their localities and discussed mutual concerns that SURTC might be able to address. Coordination and cooperation among transit systems, including crossing jurisdictional lines, was

one major topic. Bruce Lindholm, of the South Dakota Department of Transportation, observed that it is easier to achieve coordination in small towns than in larger ones, because small communities have more economic incentive. Julia Bommelman of MAT-Fargo and Lori VanBeek of Moorhead Transit said the two cities work closely together and are looking at further integration in areas like ride passes and purchasing equipment. Rich Douglas of the Wyoming DOT told about an effort involving communities in the Bighorn Basin to establish regional transit to provide intercity bus service. Lyn Hellegaard of the Montana Transit Association said coordination is working in Montana, using software to locate rides on other systems, including crossing county lines and cooperation with Native American reservations.

Changes in ridership patterns were noted, with the number of youth using transit increasing while use by the elderly is declining. SURTC surveys have shown that the elderly and disadvantaged prefer riding with friends or relatives to using transit.

Need for driver education and training was noted by committee members. Peggy Morris of the Dakota Transit Association said that driver training is a major concern in her rural area, and that drivers may know how to drive but not how to deal with people.

Bruce Fuchs of the North Dakota DOT raised the topic of a need for more flexibility in federal funding. Programs that require a 50-50 match with the transit system to operate are not realistic in small towns where money to meet the match is just not available, he said. Also, some federal funding programs have reporting requirements so extensive that it is virtually impossible for small organizations to comply with them. Barbara Sisson responded that she needed a "tutorial" on how different types of funds can be used and that she

understands that "one size does not fit all." Chris Zeilinger observed that it is harder to make a case for transit funding in rural areas, but that these areas need transit services to retain people who need them, like the elderly, and preserve the community. It is cheaper for society to keep these rural people in their homes and provide



SURTC Steering Committee attendees (l. to r.): Lyn Hellegaard, Tony Kouneski, Barbara Sisson, Gene Griffin, Julia Bommelman, David Sprynczynatyk, Lori VanBeek, Gary Hegland, Bruce Lindholm, Peggy Morris, Chris Zeilinger, Rich Douglas, Del Peterson, Jill Hough, Keven Anderson, Bruce Fuchs.



transportation rather than to pay for them to be in nursing homes, he said.

Rapidly increasing insurance costs for transit systems was cited as a major problem by Keven Anderson of the Minnesota DOT. He said one system in the state had a 100 percent premium increase; many systems are seeing increases of 50 to 75 percent. Other committee members agreed that insurance is a major issue, with fewer providers willing to insure transit systems.

Other topics suggested for future attention by SURTC included revenue sources, driver safety training, multi-state procurement, transit economics for small systems, development of economical and easy-to-use scheduling software, and ITS integration into rural transit. Meeting minutes are available at www.surtc.org.

Sperling warns of continued vehicle growth



Dr. Daniel Sperling, UC-Davis

The number of personal vehicles in the world continues to increase rapidly, growing ten-fold from 1950 to 1990, and about half of all oil consumed is used for transportation. Current trends anticipate 3.5 billion vehicles by

2050, with vehicle travel forecast to increase five-fold, according to Daniel Sperling, director of the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California, Davis. Sperling presented a seminar at NDSU September 9, sponsored by the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center.

Personal transportation is available at low cost, resulting in greater mobility in developing countries along with increased energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, Sperling said. There has been a proliferation of small vehicles, including motorcycles and small farm-type vehicles also used for transportation. Many of these are very inefficient and emit large amounts of carbon and other pollutants.

The average carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was 375 parts per million in 1990 compared to a pre-industrial baseline of 250 ppm. The level is predicted to hit 550 ppm about 2050, unless the level is stabilized by reducing carbon emissions. Just stabilizing carbon dioxide at a level around 450 to 550 ppm would require reducing emissions by as much as 90 percent

from projected levels, Sperling said. Achieving this would require revolutionary change.

The world fossil fuel potential is huge, he said, but it is not evenly distributed, and unconventional sources such as coal, tar sands and oil shale have high environmental and economic costs.

In the United States, Sperling said, trends are heading in the “wrong” direction, with one important exception. Air pollution is steadily dropping in most U.S. cities. However, transit’s share of transportation is decreasing, vehicle use is increasing and vehicles are getting larger and heavier, and fuel economy continues to fall. Vehicle travel is increasing much faster than the population, and the U.S. transportation system is a “monoculture” dominated by cars run on petroleum fuel.

Fuel economy of U.S. vehicles has been getting slowly worse since the mid 1980s. Today’s vehicles actually have higher technical efficiency, but fuel economy is being traded for vehicle weight, power and performance. Sperling said there have been tremendous engineering advances, but not to improve economy.

What can be done? A combination of strategies to reduce vehicular travel, improve conventional technology, and introduce advanced vehicles and low-carbon fuels, he said. A study in the San Francisco Bay area identified a list of behavioral strategies to reduce vehicular travel, including reduced transit fares, improved transit service, car pooling, additional gas taxes, smog-based vehicle registration fees, regional congestion pricing, and non-work parking charges.

In Europe there is a goal of reducing carbon dioxide emissions of light cars by 25 percent by 2008. The major strategy planned to accomplish this goal is a 90 percent penetration of diesel cars. European policy favors diesel cars while U.S. standards are 5 to 10 times more stringent. The goal is a collective target rather than individual automakers, and the European auto industry is more or less on track to meet the objective, Sperling said.

Sperling sees the pathway to a “sustainable” vehicle as involving internal combustion-electric hybrids and the hydrogen fuel cell. Batteries continue to improve, he said, but the industry has decided that battery powered electric cars is not the way to go. Battery cars cost more, but they do work in limited applications and can be competitive. The hybrid electric can have a downsized engine that operates where most efficient and uses batteries to capture braking energy.

(continued on page 4)



(Sperling cont. from page 3)

Sperling cited Toyota's strategy to introduce more hybrid vehicles. Engineering improvements are present as the 2004 Toyota Prius is larger, more powerful and has better fuel economy and lower emissions than the 2001 model, at the same price.

Success of fuel cell vehicles will depend on marketing them as a new product because they will not be able to compete with internal combustion vehicles on a cost basis for many years. Fuel cell engines do have desirable attributes, including smooth, powerful acceleration, silent operation, high power on demand, and quiet, clean mobile power generation. Manufacturers' costs could be reduced by an expanded design envelope and elimination of costs for emission controls.

Sperling said the trend toward intelligent transportation now involves local government and car companies, each providing small improvements. The question is how to achieve large improvements. What is needed is a new mobility system involving smart car sharing, dynamic ride sharing and smart transit systems. These concepts can be combined to make transportation more convenient and less costly, if people are willing to accept some minor inconveniences.

Possible benefits of car sharing, for example, could include motorists having access to different types of vehicles, such as a small economical car to use during the work week and a larger vehicle to haul recreational equipment on the weekend.

Communication and information technology could spur major improvements in transportation efficiency, he said.



Dakota Transit Association conference

"Focus on Transit" was the theme for the 2003 Dakota Transit Association (DTA) annual conference held at the Ramada Inn, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

DTA is made up of transit operators and managers from North and South Dakota. A total of 88 attended, including four from the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, three each from North Dakota and South Dakota DOTs and two representatives from the regional FTA office in Denver.

The two-and-a-half day conference was filled with educational and learning experiences. Tuesday was a

day for a round table discussion lead by Jill Hough. The discussion centered on two subjects; fund raising for local match and operating, and government regulations.

On Wednesday Ream Lazaro from Lazaro and Noel, LLC, a transit consulting firm, presented information on leadership from "Focus on Excellence" and "Crisis Management for Transit Drivers" and talked about homeland security and safety.

Thursday morning Kristine Paranica, director of the University of North Dakota's Conflict Resolution Center lead a group discussion on the leadership qualities that are admired in others and how all of us have or can acquire those attributes. The group identified how conflict keeps us from living those values or qualities at work and in our communities, and began to develop an awareness of how individuals can better manage conflict and develop leadership skills.

"Driver of the year" awards were presented to recipients from both states for outstanding performance. The winner from North Dakota was Gene Melby who works for



Gene Melby and Aneta Gross

the Wells, Sheridan County Aging Council in Harvey. The South Dakota winner was Aneta Gross who works for West River Transit Authority, Inc. in Spearfish.

Round Table Discussion

Jill Hough, director of SURTC, led a roundtable discussion which explored avenues of local funding for transit agencies operating in North Dakota and South Dakota. The group identified a large number of fundraising activities being utilized in the two states including the following:

- **United Way:** Ask for funds from your local United Way fund by telling the story of services provided by your agency and the needs of the people you serve.
- **Area Foundation:** Build relationships with the managers of area foundations like Bremer Bank by taking part in community activities and telling your story to the public and foundation supporters.



- **Forming Partnerships:** Form partnerships with local retail outlets (like K-Mart, Wal-Mart, or shopping malls) and service organizations (Knights of Columbus, Eagles, Jaycees) who can help with local match.
- **Bus Advertising:** Display signs made by a local sign company on buses. Transit provides and pays for the sign, and charge local advertisers a monthly fee to advertise. Locating advertising on the back of the bus has the highest visibility.
- **Individuals:** Evaluate your users' friends and relatives. There may be some individuals who, if approached, have the desire and ability to give significant financial support.
- **Variety of fund raisers:** Examples are raffles and rummage sales, business donated items as a form of advertising, raffling off booklets of tickets for bus rides, etc.
- **Talk to community government bodies:** This includes telling your story to the city councils and county commissioners. When these bodies understand the needs and your business they may be willing to give some assistance.
- **Relationships/community participation:** Always be visible in your community by attending functions, assisting local entities and building relationships wherever possible.
- **Head Start partnership:** Obtain signed contracts to deliver Head Start students. Develop a relationship with the Head Start program first.
- **Hire good employees:** Company employees represent the company; the business becomes what they display, their courtesy, friendliness and competence.
- **Catering local events:** If senior meals and transit are co-located, start a catering service with staff cooks and cater special events in your community.
- **Build on your strengths:** Evaluate the strengths of your organization and transform them into fund raising projects.
- **Golf tournaments "on ice:"** Brainstorm for different and unusual entertainment activities that can be done in local communities.
- **Estate beneficiary:** Work with customers sharing your story about services and needs and hoping to be

thought of in the wills of some of your customers. Starting endowment funds is also a good idea.

- **Gifts of rides - gift certificates:** Generate certificates that can be purchased by adult children and given to their parents, or other individuals who use the service.
- **Reach out to adult child:** Senior citizens who receive rides from the transit service may feel the rides should be free; their children may have an entirely different feeling and be grateful to pay so the adult child doesn't have to provide the service.
- **Rent out centers:** If you have a large center, consider renting it out for social and family functions in your community.
- **Sororities:** Service organizations of adult woman who do good deeds in the community and raise money for local causes.
- **Wildlife tours:** Organize and conduct wildlife tours or bird watching events in your communities; many people will pay to participate in these activities.
- **Christmas tree gifts:** Make ride coupons available for Christmas gifts to be put on the gift trees in local religious/church facilities.
- **Sponsoring rides:** Other agencies, entities, or family and friends may want to become sponsors. Make sure you have the paperwork available to make this easy. Promote this idea to local businesses for their workers.
- **Raffles and rummage sales;** Create opportunities for local businesses to advertise by contributing their products; also items from other members in the community.
- **Radio-a-thon:** Sponsor a radio-a-thon for pledges of donations over the course of the following year.
- **Flyer – newsletters:** Send information to local businesses, customers, and community members spelling out the needs of the organization for its various functions.
- **ASK:** Transportation entities need to ask for financial help from entities in their local communities.

(Round Table continued on page 12)





APTA TEA21 reauthorization proposal incorporates many ideas proposed by small transit agencies

Tony Kouneski, vice president, membership – APTA

Congress continues its deliberations of a reauthorization bill of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA21), the transit

industry is well positioned to achieve a successful renewal of the act. Organizations such as the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) and the Community Transit Association of America (CTAA) have put forth strong and persuasive arguments that will lead to more federal support for public transportation. The strength of the transit industry's proposals is in the fact that large and small systems, bus systems and rail systems, and systems from large urban, small urban and rural areas have come together to promote a reauthorization bill that addresses the public transportation needs in communities of all sizes and interests.

APTA's reauthorization proposal has the active support of its diverse membership of large and small urban, suburban and rural communities. APTA's proposal includes a number of recommendations that address specifically the needs of smaller urban areas. Among the recommendations that directly or indirectly benefit smaller urban areas are:

- **Increased Formula Funding for Smaller**

Systems: APTA's proposal calls for an 87 percent increase in formula funding for urban areas of all sizes. For small urbanized areas, this would increase funding for the program from \$334 million in FY 2003 to \$626 million in FY 2009. Because of the increasing number of rural systems, APTA's proposal calls for the Section 5311 rural program to receive an additional increment of funding each year, beginning with \$35 million in FY 2004 and increasing \$3.72 million each subsequent year. Overall, the rural program would increase 110 percent from \$240 million in FY 2003 to \$504 million in FY 2009.

- **Bonus for High Intensity Small Urbanized**

Areas: APTA's proposal recommends the creation of a new "High Intensity Small Urbanized Area Formula Program" that would provide formula funding - in addition to funding under the current formula program for small urbanized areas - that would be distributed among those small urban areas that provide service above the average level of service in larger urban areas. The proposed

program would be funded at \$35 million in FY 2004 and grow to almost \$54 million in FY 2009.

- **Aging Bus Replacement Program:** APTA's proposal recommends the creation of a new aging bus replacement program for rural areas and for urban areas of less than one million. Under the program, grants would be provided to replace vehicles – buses and vans – that exceed 150 percent of the FTA recommended age for replacement for that size of bus. The proposed program would be funded at \$100 million in FY 2004 and grow to almost \$156 million in FY 2009.

- **Transitional Authority for Urbanized Areas over 200,000 in population:** APTA's proposal would permit urbanized areas that grow from less than 200,000 to more than 200,000 or which were added to urbanized areas of more than 200,000 population as a result of the 2000 Census, to annually use an amount of federal transit funds equal to the amount they were allowed to use for operating purposes in FY 2002 for operating purposes through FY 2009.

- **Other Benefits:** In addition to the proposals cited above, APTA's recommendations would provide increased flexibility under drug and alcohol testing programs and charter bus regulations, both of which directly benefit transit operators in small urban areas. APTA also calls for improved coordination or combining of federal reviews and audits to avoid duplication. APTA requests motor fuel tax exemptions for services operated with vehicles with seating capacity of 7-20 passengers, a category of service that currently does not receive the federal fuel excise tax exemption. APTA further calls for the establishment of federal requirements to coordinate services under TANF and Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) programs. Finally, APTA's proposal would allow transit grant recipients to procure vehicles and other products from the GSA Schedule, which would help small transit agencies, without great purchasing power, to save money in the purchase of vehicles and other capital items.



Altogether, APTA's recommended plan for TEA 21 reauthorization reflects an outstanding level of input and consideration by America's smaller public transportation systems. The fact that these proposals are strongly endorsed by America's large transit systems is testimony to the fact that they are sound ideas that will enhance the federal program.

Directions & trends

**Chris Zeilinger, assistant director,
Governmental Affairs – CTAA**



One of the triumphs of transit in rural areas, small cities, and other communities is that inclusive, effective coordination is a long-standing fact of life in these places. From the very first days of rural public transit demonstration programs in the 1970s, planners, providers and officials all recognized that there had to be effective, community-based partnerships to make these programs work. Immediately upon its establishment in 1979, the small transit program of grants for elderly and disabled persons' transportation, currently called Sec. 5310, became the central source of capital assistance for senior services and local disability-related programs all across the country, drawing on the resources of the Older Americans Act and various disability services grant programs for operating support.

Confronting the disincentives of coordination

In addition to the discomfort that organizations may feel when they are asked to unveil all the hidden costs behind their transportation programs, there are several other profound disincentives to coordinating a community's transportation network. Foremost is that most federal and state funding streams simply do not reward program efficiencies; this can be particularly problematic in formula-based programs, where grantees – and communities – are likely to lose money if they start providing more service with fewer, but better coordinated, dollars. Another potential pitfall rests in those programs where volunteers or staff members are reimbursed for automobile mileage. Such reimbursements are not supposed to be a profit-sharing enterprise, but we hear from dozens of volunteer transportation programs across the country whose participants candidly admit they are “in it for the money.” And, of course, there are other, well-understood, disincentives, such as the loss of autonomy when resources are shared among partners, perceptions that quality of personalized services are somehow compromised, and the simple fact that most

bureaucratic processes make it so much easier *not* to coordinate services than to try and harmonize oft-conflicting program requirements and expectations.

Facing the challenges that don't go away

Community transportation providers have been working hard to coordinate services for decades. Some gratitude should be expressed to the Coordinating Council for Access and Mobility, which was formed out of a 1986 agreement between the U.S. Dept. of Transportation and the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS). Immediately upon its creation, this council proceeded with all due procedural speed to identify the federal barriers to coordinating federal human services programs with the transportation programs essential to their mission. One by one, those federal issues that could be resolved between the departments were overcome, so that by the 1990s, HHS staff could attest, truthfully, that all surmountable federal barriers had been addressed.

However, the federal departments and their coordinating council could not solve two of the greatest problems facing communities' coordinated transportation efforts. One of these is insurance, which once again has entered a period where transportation efforts are hampered by the costs, conditions and availability of commercial insurance. The federal government is powerless to help, because the insurance market is governed almost entirely by states' laws and agencies.

The other leading challenge that is beyond federal agencies' ability to help is that of trying to provide transportation services that cross local jurisdictional boundaries, such as city and county lines. These jurisdictional issues often are purely local in nature, so that even state agencies may have a limited chance to improve the coordination of efforts. However, one area where states could help is in conveying accurate, reliable information about their own jurisdictional requirements; we frequently hear of coordination barriers purportedly based on state statutes that turn out to be either fictitious or misunderstood. Meanwhile, on the federal level, the U.S. Dept. of Transportation is beginning to recognize the need to improve coordination between its own Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration and the FTA.

The willingness to share and learn

As mentioned earlier in this article, rural and community-based transit has a long history of coordination and partnership. What we are seeing is that many of the trends, issues, and challenges that are confronting our colleagues in larger urban areas are those that rural and small-city America's transit



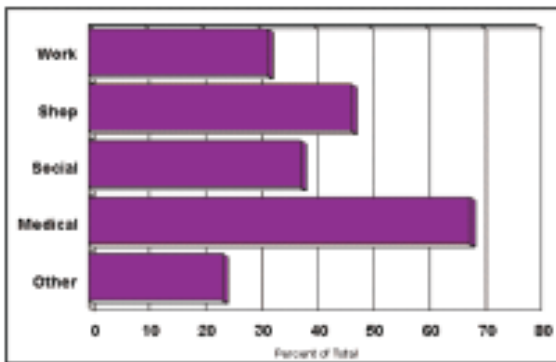
SURTC RESEARCH

Disadvantaged say improvements needed in public transportation

Members of the disadvantaged population—those disabled from birth, from an accident or because of age—face many barriers to leading a normal lifestyle, including access to transportation. A survey by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute to find how well the transit service needs of the disadvantaged are being met in North Dakota found that while respondents are largely satisfied with transit services, a higher percentage of disadvantaged North Dakotans reported transportation problems than the national average.

North Dakota has a disadvantaged population of over 98,000 which amounts to just over 15 percent of the total population. The survey shows more than half the disadvantaged earn \$15,000 or less per year. Many live in rural areas where there is a lower tax base to fund public services. Counties with lower population densities actually tend to have higher concentrations of disadvantaged. Slope County, for example, has the lowest total population in the state and the highest percentage disabled population at 28.3 percent. A large percentage of the disadvantaged population is made up of the elderly, a segment that continues to grow.

Mobility, the ability to go to work or school, obtain medical help, go shopping or interact with friends and family, plays an important role in allowing the disadvantaged to participate in the social and economic system.



Primary reasons of travel for the disadvantaged.

Respondents indicated various sources for transportation, including driving themselves, a personal auto with a driver, public transportation, and riding with friends or family members. Driving by themselves and riding with family members were the most common means of transportation, followed by public transportation. Some do not want to ride public transportation; many have

spent their lives in rural areas and have no experience with public transportation. Others would use public transportation if it were available to them.

Most respondents, 88 percent, had a short distance to travel, five miles or less, to a community where they conduct most of their business. This may suggest there is limited public transit available to respondents in rural areas.



photo courtesy of Michel Hoffart

The North Dakota Department of Transportation subsidizes many types of public transit throughout the state. The choice of transit varies because different counties have also sought out federal funding assistance. The disadvantaged are eligible for subsidized travel assistance in all counties, including taxis in some counties.

Demand response rather than fixed route is the most common type of transit available and may occur as a senior center bus, paratransit, county bus or van. This type of service is flexible enough to offer door-to-door service.

Respondents were asked if they had any unmet transportation needs, and nearly 61 percent indicated they did. The most requested improvements in service included increased service hours, lower fares, more convenient scheduling and reduced riding time. There is especially a need for increased transportation for weekends and holidays. Advance time required to reserve a ride, often one to three days, was considered too long by many respondents.

In general, respondents agree that transportation providers in North Dakota are doing an acceptable job of serving their clients. Expanded service, primarily on weekends and holidays, is the major concern. Fares are always an issue, with customers wanting them lower and providers feeling they need to be higher to meet costs of doing business. Most systems in the state are already subsidized by federal funding.



Coordination by all agencies involved in providing transportation to the disadvantaged may be the best solution to meeting the need for expanding hours of service, and may also help with scheduling and the number of trips providers can make. Maximum use of federal funding and coordinating services are two probable means to provide increased transportation services to the disadvantaged in North Dakota.

Fargo-Moorhead universities transit research

Our last newsletter identified some of the research being conducted with NDSU transit and Metropolitan Area Transit (MAT) in terms of what can be done to improve services. As the results of that research became known, SURTC was asked to expand the project to include Minnesota State University-Moorhead (MSUM) and Concordia College.

The population of the Fargo Moorhead area is approximately 174,367. The total enrollment for the four major colleges of NDSU, MSUM, Concordia, and Northwest Technical College for the 2003-2004 year is 23,137; including faculty and staff increases the numbers to 26,548. These students, faculty, and staff could have a significant impact on MAT's ridership.

SURTC has now completed surveys of both MSUM and Concordia for transit and also Concordia for a night taxi service similar to the "Deuce" that covers students on the NDSU campus. These surveys revealed a lot of information about student behavior, desires, and perceptions of the current services on the three campuses. It turns out that significant numbers of students on the Concordia campus are envious of the night taxi now available at both the NDSU and MSUM campuses.

MAT is now better able to respond to student needs on the F-M campuses because they are more aware of students' travel patterns, such as: what time of day most students are moving, how many students live certain distances from respective campuses, services that students indicate they would use, and the amount students are willing to pay for services offered by MAT. Call (701)231-7767 if you would like a copy of the final report of the University Campus Transit Study.



Innovative ITS tool kit to help rural transit systems

Ninety million rural residents of the United States may be the direct beneficiaries of a plan now in the works at the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center (SURTC). SURTC is creating a tool kit for the approximately 1,200 rural transit organizations that provide fixed-route and demand-responsive services. Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) applications, widely applied to the highway system, and in use in an increasing number of urban transit systems, have not been widely employed by rural systems.

Small urban and rural systems have not been able to purchase and adopt the many new technologies in computers, telecommunications and information systems used by larger urban transit systems that have greater resources and capabilities.

Three factors contributing to limited technology use by rural systems are:

- The lack of financial resources to acquire and maintain new technologies always challenges innovation. Through the SURTC tool kit, rural systems can determine the cost effectiveness of such investments.
- Rural transit managers may not have the time or the knowledge necessary to sort through the volume of information and complex articles available. SURTC will sort through the information to show potential benefits.
- Rural transit systems may lack personnel with the specialized knowledge and skills to evaluate and implement high-tech solutions. The SURTC research team does the literature review and screens reports, publications and Web sites relevant for rural transit operations.

Through SURTC, a rural ITS tool kit will help inform rural transit system operators of the choices available. This will let them systematically and quickly determine the costs and benefits of each technology as applied to their individual operation. The ITS tool kit can help systems make the best use of their dollars.

As SURTC team members work initially to review literature and the state of ITS practice, they are also developing an evaluation criteria framework. Cost/benefit factors for each ITS technology will lead to information summaries about fleet management systems, travel information systems, electronic fare collection and other emerging technologies with potential transit application.

(Tool Kit continued on page 10)



(Tool Kit cont. from page 9)

Their summaries will include a generic description of each application and the technological components involved; a listing of American, Canadian and European vendors; transit systems of all sizes that have implemented the technology; written case study and/or evaluation reports on the technology or specific applications, and the data required to allow for evaluation of the cost/benefit factors criteria.

Development of case study sites should begin this spring at five to 10 locations around the country. SURTC staff will make site visits to each case study location to observe the application of one or more ITS technologies and will obtain data and subjective

information to provide the best information for the tool kit.

Preparation and pilot tests of the tool kit will then begin. This draft version will go to volunteer transit managers to determine if it is understandable and, more importantly, if it is an effective management tool. Revisions will be based on feedback from the pilot tests.

Jill Hough, director of SURTC, is co-principal investigator for the project and will be responsible for carrying out the management functions of the project. The other co-principal investigators are Del Peterson and James Miller. Patrick Nichols, UGPTI Website development professional, is responsible for packaging the tool kit in CD form.

SURTC STAFF



Hough nominated to TOPS committee

Jill Hough, program director for the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute at North Dakota State University, has been selected to serve on the oversight

and project selection committee of the Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP).

TCRP, authorized in 1991, is a research program designed to focus on the needs of transit operating agencies. It is sponsored by the Federal Transit Administration and carried out under an agreement among the National Academies of Science acting through the Transportation Research Board, the Transit Development Corporation, the educational and research arm of the American Public Transit Association, and the FTA. As a member of the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee, Hough will be involved in setting the research agenda for TCRP. The TOPS committee, composed of transit system managers, university representatives, suppliers and the FTA, selects projects from research topics submitted by the transit industry or developed to meet special research needs. Research topics come from a wide variety of areas including operations, services, engineering of facilities and equipment, maintenance, human resources, administration, and policy and planning.

Hough has 12 years of experience in transportation research. She serves as director of UGPTI's Small Urban and Rural Transit Center, which focuses on

research, education and training for the public transportation industry. She has published reports and articles in the areas of low-volume roads, logistics and economic development and has worked on several projects with the U.S. Department of Transportation. She spent four months as interim director for the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Intelligent Vehicle Initiative in Washington, D.C.

Hough received B.S. and M.S. degrees in agricultural economics at NDSU and is currently working on her Ph.D. in transportation technology and policy from the University of California-Davis.

Hegland to participate on Montana RTAP committee



Gary Hegland was named as ad hoc member to the Montana RTAP advisory board at a two-day meeting held Oct. 9-10 in Helena, Mont. This is a four-member committee that assists programming and budgeting of the state's RTAP dollars. RTAP funds may be used to support non-urbanized transit activities in four categories: training, technical assistance, research and related support services. This program is a component of the Section 5311 grant.

Hegland earned his B.S. and M.S. in economics from NDSU. He has several years of experience working with transportation issues. Hegland has worked with SURTC for one and one-half years.





Peterson joins SURTC team

When Del Peterson was growing up in rural Minnesota, he learned how important transportation is to a community and to community building. In a North Dakota State University graduate class he heard John Bitzan,

advanced research fellow with the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, talk about transportation projects. Peterson's interest was piqued.

Today Peterson is an associate research fellow with the Small Urban and Rural Transit Center. New to the fast-developing SURTC program, Peterson is learning to implement the Geographic Information System into practical situations.

Involved in the James River Transit Project, he is figuring out the where, when and how of changing from an on-call response system providing senior and handicapped transportation to a regular bus system. He will also be involved in the North Dakota Statewide Mobility Plan and the Transportation Services of North Dakota Coordination Study. Among his research interests is the dilemma facing many rural states. The out migration of young people, the family support system that might have provided transportation to older or handicapped family members is gone. The need for public transportation systems to pick up where families can no longer provide transportation for medical, social and other needs is evident.

Peterson's background in transportation economics and policy provides some of his incentive to see projects move from idea to implementation, and move toward mobility for people and products.

He earned his B.A. in economics and management from the University of Minnesota-Morris and his M.S. in agricultural and applied economics from North Dakota State University.



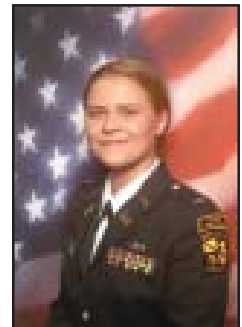
Public transportation course to be offered

Spring semester, January 2004, a course in public transportation will be offered over the TEL8 system. TEL8 is a telecommunications system allowing individuals to

connect from several different locations. The course will originate out of North Dakota State University and will be telecast to sites in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, and Colorado. The course will be offered for university credit (3 credit hours). It will be scheduled to take place one day a week for 2 hours and 40 minutes. The course instructors will be James Miller and Jill Hough. James Miller is a retired faculty member from Penn State with 25 years of experience in public transportation. Hough, director of SURTC, is currently earning her PhD from the University of California, Davis and has 12 years of experience in transportation. If you are interested in taking the course, please contact Kathy McCarthy at (701) 231-7767.

Student assistant receives degree and commission

Crystal Bahe, who served as a student research assistant during her undergraduate career at NDSU, received both her degree in sociology and a commission as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army at the end of spring semester.



Bahe, a native of Barnesville, Minn., comes from a military family, with both her father and grandfather servicing in the armed forces. Already a member of the Army reserve, she qualified for an ROTC scholarship that basically paid for her college education in return for four years of active duty. Following her officer basic training at Fort Leonard Wood she will serve with an engineer unit in Europe.

As a research assistant she worked on several studies, conducting surveys and setting up data bases. Projects she was involved with included road studies for Cass County, North Dakota, and Mendocino County, California; a disabilities study for North Dakota, and an intelligent transportation system study. Jill Hough of SURTC said "Crystal did an outstanding job at SURTC and will be greatly missed."





Summer student intern

Dustin Ulmer, a senior in management information systems at NDSU, came to SURTC as a summer Intern, fulfilling a requirement for graduation from the College of Business Administration. His duties include preparing reports from survey data, creating databases and managing census data. He is from LaMoure, North Dakota. Dustin will continue to work at SURTC through the academic year 2003-04.

(Directions cont. from page 7)

programs addressed years ago. Now that the Federal Transit Administration has breathed new life into its awareness and support for this sort of coordination, the time should be right for our lessons and successes in areas such as cost-effective demand-response transit, co-mingling of diverse passenger groups on shared vehicles, shared ownership and operation of transit assets, customer- and service-focused applications of technology, and more, to be shared with our colleagues in the suburbs and larger cities. They may resist at first, but they already are starting to appreciate the knowledge and skills we have to offer.

Events Calendar: *

TRB 83rd Annual Meeting, Jan. 11-15, 2004 • Washington, DC

2004 Montana Transit Association Meeting, April 14-16, 2004 • Great Falls, MT

ITS America 2004 Annual Meeting & Exposition, April 26-29, 2004 • San Antonio, TX

APTA 2004 Bus & Paratransit Conference, May 2-5, 2004 • Denver, CO

CTAA Moving Mountains EXPO 2004, June 13-18, 2004 • Seattle, WA

WYTRANS 16th Annual Conf. & Bus Rodeo, June 24-26, 2004 • Riverton, WY

*Training Sessions will be scheduled. Please check the SURTC Website.

(Round Table cont. from page 5)

The round table discussion was an excellent opportunity for transit system operators to share their successes in regard to local fundraising activities. The ideas are listed with a brief description on how they work. SURTC has the names of the individuals who shared these ideas and their phone numbers. If you have any questions about any of the fundraising ideas please call SURTC and we can put you in touch with the individual who reported on the fund raiser. (701) 231-6436

SUBMIT YOUR BEST PRACTICES AND HAVE YOUR NAME ENTERED TO WIN A TERRY REDLIN EXCLUSIVE EDITION PRINT. COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING STEPS TO BE ELIGIBLE:

1.

Write a short paragraph describing the most recent best practice procedure or function your agency has started. (example: a safety procedure, money-saving procedure, management technique)

2.

Register on the SURTC Webpage discussion board at www.surtc.org/signUp/dBoard.php.

3.

Submit the practice to SURTC through the discussion board on our Webpage.

Drawing will be held December 15, 2003. Winners will be contacted by phone. SURTC dollars are not being used to purchase prints.