

# TRANSIT LANE

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

## Brief

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## National Conference on Rural and Intercity Bus Transportation

SURTC staff were heavily involved in the 19th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. Dr. Jill Hough, SURTC Director, served as chair of the conference, held October 24-27 in Burlington, Vermont.

The conference attracted approximately 350 attendees from across the country, including transit providers, transportation planners, and researchers. Several of the participants were first time attendees.



*Chittenden County Transportation Authority Bus, Burlington, VT*

SURTC researchers David Ripplinger, Del Peterson, and Jeremy Mattson presented papers and moderated sessions. Ripplinger gave presentations on technology use by rural transit agencies and use of Rural National Transit Database (Rural NTD) data, and he moderated a session on the Rural NTD. Peterson presented a paper titled *Ride or Relocate*, which quantified the cost of living at home and riding transit versus relocating to an assisted living facility. He also moderated a session on commuter programs. Mattson presented the findings from two studies on mobility of older adults and people with disabilities in North Dakota. The full reports for all of these studies can be found on the SURTC website at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php).

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### Special points of interest:

- 19th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Held
- Brenda Schweitzer Travels Abroad for TCRP Program
- Research projects completed for transportation and access to health care, mobility of people with disabilities, and North Dakota regional transit coordination



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

## Schweitzer Abroad for TCRP's International Transit Studies Program

Brenda Schweitzer, Executive Director of Brookings Area Transit Authority in Brookings, SD, recently spent 10 days visiting transit systems around the world with a group of transit professionals from the United States. The trip was part of the Transit Cooperative Research Program's (TCRP's)

International Transit Studies Program (ITSP).

Schweitzer was nominated and selected to participate in the fall 2010 Transportation Mission Study, "Public Transportation Systems as the Foundation for Economic Growth." The trip took her and her group to (International Trip continued on page 4)



*Brenda Schweitzer in Johannesburg, South Africa*

# Message from the Director

Dr. Jill Hough

Happy New Year! SURTC appreciates the connection we have had with you during 2010, and we look forward to continued partnership in 2011. The start of a new year always brings time of reflection and anticipation of new adventures. In 2010, SURTC crisscrossed the country to provide training and conduct research to improve the mobility of all, paying particular attention to people with disabilities and the growing senior population. SURTC was actively involved in planning the 2010 Rural and Intercity Bus Conference held in Burlington, VT. We will not slow down in 2011. Please visit our website for additional information and let us know how we can better serve you. Best wishes for a wonderful 2011.



Conference Planning Committee

## Rural Transit Systems Honored

Six rural transit systems were honored with this year's Outstanding Rural Transit System award, including South Central Adult Services of Valley City, ND. The awards were presented at the National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Burlington, VT, Oct. 26 to the following transit providers for their successes in addressing major challenges in providing coordinated transportation services:

- Special Transit of Boulder, CO
- Rural Community Transportation of St. Johnsbury, VT
- Citylink Public Transit System of Worley, ID
- Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency of Cookeville, TN
- Flint Hills Transportation Agency of Manhattan, KS
- South Central Adult Services Council of Valley City, ND



Therese McMillan, FTA Deputy Administrator;  
Pat Hansen, South Central Adult Services;  
Jill Hough, SURTC

## Staff Changes



David Ripplinger

**David Ripplinger** left SURTC in January 2011 to begin working as a research assistant in the Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics at North Dakota State University (NDSU). Dave had been at SURTC since 2004 and conducted numerous research projects and technology training. He will be missed, and we wish him well in his new position.

**Marc Scott**, Ph.D. Candidate in Transportation and Logistics at NDSU, began a one-year internship as a research analyst with SURTC in December 2010. Formerly, Marc was a graduate student research assistant with SURTC. Marc will conduct research on the importance of vehicle supplier attributes used as evaluation criteria by public transportation agency procurement decision makers. Marc will also be involved in research relating to campus transit and state of good repair.



Marc Scott

## Events Calendar

TRF—2011 Annual Forum

Mar. 10-12, 2011 • Long Beach, CA

APTA—2011 Bus & Paratransit Conference

May 22-25, 2011 • Memphis, TN

CTAA—2011 EXPO

June 5-11, 2011 • Indianapolis, IN

ITSA—2011 National Rural ITS Conference

Aug. 28-31, 2011 • Coeur d'Alene, ID

APTA—Expo 2011 & Annual Meeting

Oct. 3-5, 2011 • New Orleans, LA

ITSA—2011 Annual Meeting & Exposition

Oct. 16-20, 2011 • Orlando, FL

# Impact of Transportation and Distance on Access to Health Care Studied

Transportation is a vital issue for access to health care, especially in rural areas where travel distances are great and access to transit is less prevalent. SURTC researcher Jeremy Mattson recently completed a study that examined the impacts of transportation and travel distance on use of health care services for older adults in rural and small urban areas.

In the study, a random sample of individuals aged 60 or older living in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, and Wyoming were surveyed by mail. Responses were received from 543 individuals.

The study found that those who needed care were generally able to access it. However, those who cannot drive make more trips if someone else in the household can drive, and individuals traveling longer distances or those with fewer transportation options were more likely to report difficulties in making trips or to delay a trip. If someone delays a trip, he or she may not get the care at the time it is most needed.

By providing transportation to health care services, especially preventive care, people can manage their conditions better, their health status



Jeremy Mattson

may improve, and in the long-run there could be a decrease in health care costs. The greatest problems reported for using public transportation were inconvenient schedules and infrequent service.

The full report is available online at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php). For more information, contact Jeremy Mattson at (701) 231-5496 or [jeremy.w.mattson@ndsu.edu](mailto:jeremy.w.mattson@ndsu.edu).

## SURTC Surveys People with Disabilities in North Dakota

A recently completed SURTC study led by Jeremy Mattson addressed issues of mobility for people with disabilities in North Dakota. The study surveyed a sample of individuals with disabilities in the state, collecting information regarding travel behavior, ability to make needed or desired trips, use of community transportation options, unmet needs, and difficulties encountered.

A significant percentage of respondents were found to desire

more trips than they are currently taking, and lack of transportation appears to be the main limiting factor.



Fargo-Moorhead Paratransit Bus

The study examined specific problems with transit service, use of travel training, and use of door-to-door or door-through-door service, and it compared results from a similar survey conducted nearly a decade ago.

The full report is available online at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php). For more information, contact Jeremy Mattson at (701) 231-5496 or [jeremy.w.mattson@ndsu.edu](mailto:jeremy.w.mattson@ndsu.edu).

## Regional Transit Coordination in North Dakota

North Dakota's 2009 Legislature directed that the state Department of Transportation initiate two public transit regional coordination projects. NDDOT subsequently contracted with SURTC to develop corresponding implementation plans.

Regional steering committees were created in each region, and an extensive public input process was undertaken to solicit input from the regions' transit managers and the public. A review process was also undertaken to study coordination in

states that might be similar to North Dakota, to identify corresponding federal mandates concerning the coordination of transit services, and to identify industry best practices from around the country and within the two pilot regions.

Preliminary recommendations were presented to each region's regional steering committee (including all of each region's transit managers) and through a series of public information meetings. The draft report was also shared with all of the state's transit

managers; related input was included in the report. The resulting report was presented to NDDOT in December 2010. The department will forward the report, along with its corresponding implementation plans, to North Dakota's 2011 Legislature. The Legislature will ultimately determine what additional policy directives, if any, are needed.

The report is available at [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org). For more information, contact Jon Mielke at (701) 328-9865 or [jon.mielke@ndsu.edu](mailto:jon.mielke@ndsu.edu).



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### **(Conference continued)**

Held every two years, this conference focuses on the latest in best practice and current research in rural public and intercity bus transportation and provides information on planning and design; policy, funding, and finance; rural transportation in today's operating environment; technology; and special issues in rural transportation.

"This conference provides a marvelous forum to share ideas with peers from across the country and to make connections between rural and urban mobility systems," says Hough.

Most of the presentations from this conference are now available online and can be accessed on the conference's final program, produced

by the Transportation Research Board. The final program can be found at the following website: [onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/conf/2010/rural/program.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/conf/2010/rural/program.pdf).

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### **(International Trip continued)**

Istanbul, Turkey; Cairo, Egypt; and Johannesburg and Cape Town, South Africa. They toured the transit operations in these cities and studied how local investments are linked to economic growth.

This program exists to broaden the professional development of U.S. transit managers. The insights and knowledge they return home with will be useful to their organizations, the transit industry, and their own careers.

Schweitzer spoke of her trip as having a very positive impact.

"Throughout the world, transportation is a major part of society, bringing social, economic and environmental values to light," she said. "I look forward to bringing this gained knowledge to my system and the rural areas we serve. We can appreciate the sparse populations we work with, as well as the cohesive working relationships we have with the federal, state and local funding sources."

To learn more about her trip and the transit systems in these cities, go to SURTC's blog at [www.surtc.org/blog](http://www.surtc.org/blog) and read the article Schweitzer wrote about her experiences (the related article was posted on Dec. 20, 2010).