

Nebraska Transit Trends

July 2006



Diana Mckoski, Hall Co. Transit manager, received the award for highest increase (28%) in passenger boardings for a fleet of three or more vehicles. Also pictured is Jerry Wray DOR, and FTA Region VII Administrator Mokhtee Ahmad.



Billi Junge, City of Crawford transit manager, received the award for the highest increase (36%) of boardings for a one vehicle transit system. Also pictured is Jerry Wray and Mokhtee Ahmad.



Bobbi Lechner, Blue Rivers AAA, received the "Spirit Award", at the 2006 CTAA Rodeo held in Orlando. Pictured with her is Kelly Shawn, Rodeo Chairmen.



Pictured is Lois Stienike, Hall Co., discussing the finer points of Rick Evans presentation at the Managers' Workshop

Calendar of Events 2006

- Aug. 8-10 Conference on Aging - Kearney
- Aug. 1 Scott Bogren, CTAA Technical Advisor will meet @ StarTran with NATP
- Sept. 7-8 NE Rural Health Association Conf. - Kearney
- Sept. 19-20 NATP Driver Training & Statewide Rodeo
- Oct. 22-25 TRB Rural and Intercity Conference - Stevenson, Washington held at the Skamania Lodge
- Dec. 6-8 NACO Annual Conference - Omaha

Pictured is Judy Price and Bayone Meyer, Manager for Box Butte transit, at Camp Luther Monday evening (Managers' meeting) on the paddle boat.



From Georgia's Desk!

Summer is winding down and everyone is even looking forward to Fall and cooler weather! All reports across the state verify that Public Transit is busier than ever. Keep up the good work!

What a terrific Managers' Workshop. A big "Thank You to Jean Sharman, Columbus Area Transit Manager and her crew. Camp Luther was relaxing (after we got IN the paddle boat!) and the Consonnaires were fabulous. We look forward to Hastings, (Thanks Coleen for inviting us to your fair city), June 18-20, 2007.

Scholarships for the TRB Rural & Intercity Conference were awarded to Jeff Rumery (Kearney), and Laura Lindgren (Saunders Co.), Coleen Sedlacek (Adams Co.), and Carol Prince (Scotts Bluff Co.). I hope other managers are considering attending. For further information, the web site is www.trbruralconference.org.

Congratulations to Bobbi for the "Spirit Award"! You so deserve that trophy. We hope to see you as a judge at the NATP Rodeo in September. The Rodeo committee will need twenty five judges for the event, so managers, spouses, and friends are all eligible. The Rodeo information will be in the mail later in August.

See you in Kearney!
Georgia



The staff in the Rail and Public Transportation Division here at the Nebraska Department of Roads expresses our appreciation to all of you who attended the annual Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers conference in Columbus on June 19-21. It was nice to see such a large number of attendees at both the pre-conference meeting on Monday afternoon and at the conference. When I planned the set-up for the pre-conference meetings, I asked the hotel to set the room for 20. Total attendance at the meeting was 38! We had an excellent meeting with representatives from the Governor's appointed transportation work group, representatives from both Community Transportation Association of America and the Federal Transit Administration, and many transit managers from across Nebraska. Between the meeting, the conference, and the evening networking sessions, everyone should have come away from Columbus with some new ideas, with some new tools to use in the workplace, with at least some of their questions answered, and with some new acquaintances (we had some new managers in attendance this year) made. I am looking forward to the conference in Hastings in 2007.

The 2008 Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers annual conference will be held in conjunction with the 18th National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference that will be hosted by Nebraska. That conference will be held in Omaha in the fall of 2008.

The Nebraska Department of Roads is working on getting dates and sites arranged for the annual drug and alcohol training later this fall. As soon as we have that information, we will be notifying all the systems and their contact persons.

On a personal note, by wife and I became grandparents again on July 3rd. Olivia Rose is our forth grandchild (all granddaughters).

Jerry Wray, Rail and Public Transportation Liaison Manager

"Success usually comes to those who are too busy to be looking for it"
~Henry David Thoreau

Saunders County Public Transit

A lot has changed in the transportation business since I started in 1982. My first van was an old blue Ford and I had to carry a screwdriver and hammer with me because the sliding door fell off its track when you opened it! I always tried to pick up my people early so I had plenty of time to put the door back on. I don't think that would be considered safe then or now.

I have met some wonderful people throughout the years. I wish I had kept a journal. There are so many silly things that happened over time that I probably should not have done, but I have and still have a hard time saying no. I have gotten so attached to some of them and then had a hard time dealing with it after they passed away.

When I first started, I had bus loads that would go to the Senior Center every Friday. Certain ladies didn't get along with each other and refused to ride on the bus together. I let those ladies wrap me around their little fingers. I finally had to tell them they were big girls now and had to ride together so I didn't run behind picking up other people. They looked at me as though it was about time I stood up to them and nothing was ever said about it again. I've had some real doozies over the years. I really enjoy my job and just couldn't think of doing anything else.

Laura Lindgren, Saunders County Public Transportation



Pictured is Laura Lindgren with a passenger

"It's kinda fun to do the impossible."
~Walt Disney

Countermeasures for Drowsy Driving

Before “hitting the road”

- Getting adequate sleep - most adults need 7-9 hours to maintain proper alertness during the day
- Schedule proper breaks-about every 100 miles or 2 hour during long trips.
- Arrange for a travel companion - someone to talk with and share the driving
- Avoid alcohol and sedative medications - check your labels or ask your doctor.

Countermeasure to Prevent a Fall Asleep Crash While Driving

- Watch for warning signs of fatigue - see above
- Stop driving- pull off at the next exit, rest area or find a place to sleep for the night
- Take a nap - find a safe place to take a 15-20 minute nap
- Consume caffeine - the equivalent of 2 cups of coffee can increase alertness for several hours
- Try consuming caffeine before taking a short nap to get the benefits of both.

Caffeine - does it help?

Caffeine promotes short-term alertness. It takes about 30 minutes for caffeine to begin working so the best thing to do is pull over for a coffee or other caffeinated beverage, take a short nap, and then get back on the road. Keep in mind that caffeine won't have much of an effect on people who consume it regularly.

Being a demand-response, public transportation system, Saline County Area Transit (SCAT) serves all eight towns within the county as well as the rural residents, which encompasses a population of approximately 10,000.

The transit provides portal to public transportation to locations outside of Saline County, including Lincoln, Beatrice, Fairbury, York and Geneva.

Most passengers are traveling for medical purposes such as doctor appointments, eye exams, MRIs, physical therapy, dialysis treatment. Yet, with our fare structure, it costs not more if the passenger makes multiple stops. As a result passengers will typically patronize a bank, post office, attorney, financial advisor, accountant, discount store, pharmacy, restaurant, or library on the same trip. In addition, some passengers prefer to visit friends or relatives for part of the day until it is time to begin the route home.

Passengers greatly appreciate being able to accomplish two, three or even more tasks at varying locations in a single day. I believe this is one reason why, when measured by one way boardings, SCAT has experienced a significant increase over the past three years. For fiscal years 204 through 2006 one way boardings increased 5.9, 15.1, and 19.7 percent respectively over the previous fiscal year.

Routes may occasionally be as short as 40 miles, but the majority of them are 150 to 220 miles per day. In fiscal year 2006 SCAT compiled 100,821 miles, averaging 8,400 miles per month.

Historically, a crew of three or four part-time drivers has met SCAT's scheduling needs, resulting in a lot of coordination time spent by management. More recently it has become hard to compete with wages and benefits offered by other employers. In order to attract quality employees SCAT may move toward offering full-time employment and a few basic benefits to meet its core needs and fill in with part-time help for short trips. In return, it is anticipated that a stronger commitment and dedication will develop between the Transit and its driver employees. As a manager, I place emphasis on the relationship because, as with any transportation system, SCAT's drivers are the frontline to the public. And the public deserves to be greeted by friendly, helpful, courteous drivers who are willing to assist their passengers.

One issue has developed that greatly concerns me. Even with increased boardings and turnover in riders, and a strong increase in the Hispanic population, SCAT has made no progress in overcoming the communication barriers to providing transportation to the Hispanic community. While some positive steps are underway, such as using volunteer interpreters to print schedules, flyers, and advertisements in Spanish, other obstacles remain. Specifically, current staff is not bilingual and the budget is not large enough to expand the work force necessary to add routes that would meet the community's needs. Training and education for current employees may be one answer, but even the SCAT will have to fund the cost of classes and compensate employees for class time. Secondly, this requires a strong commitment for part-time staff to devote evening hours so as not to conflict with scheduled route times. None the less, when SCAT is able to work through this issue, a continued increase in usage and an expansion in the number of routes provided can be anticipated.

Scott Bartels
Saline County Area Transit



SCAT driver Ardis Niederklein receives her second place plaque at the state safe driver's competition sponsored by Nebraska Department of Roads. Also pictured is SCAT Administrator Scott Bartels.

“I find the harder I work, the more luck I seem to have.”

~ Thomas Jefferson

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Hiring, Training, and Keeping the Best People

Recruit Flexible and Caring People

Community transit is the ultimate “people oriented” business. Your passengers depend on your system for one of their most basic need: mobility. Every day, these people trust you and your staff to get them where they need to be, on time and safely.

This means that finding the right people to serve your passengers is a critical job for you. And, to find the right people, you have to know what to look for.

Today’s workplaces need flexible people who can do more than one task and who can easily adapt to changes in their jobs or routines, like adapting to a new schedule or equipment or accepting a new route.

You want people who work well as a team and who possess character traits that match the values of your organization such as honesty, integrity and trustworthiness. Most of all, you want to find people who care. This is critical for your transit system.

You can teach a person to drive. You can’t teach caring.

Who is right for the job?

As an example, let’s consider the job operators. If you approach this in a cut-and-dried manner, you would probably say that being an experienced, licensed bus driver is by far the most important qualification.

But if you put the primary, functional skill at the top of your list, you might be missing out on an entire pool of talent that’s particularly suited to your operation, such as:

- *People experienced in senior care/services
- *People who have worked with persons with disabilities
- *Retail sales clerks who are comfortable dealing with the public

Again, you want to draw from as wide a talent pool as possible. And if you are running ads in community newspapers, the lower ad space cost will give you greater flexibility to run under multiple headings.

Tip: Don’t write ads that describe. Write ads that sell!

A help-wanted ad is the marketing tool-not just a listing of requirements and tasks. You want to make potential candidates want to learn more about your transit system. So sell!

Tri-Met in Portland was looking for bus drivers. So the system’s ad had a small headline reading: “Tri-Met is hiring bus drivers”. But a larger headline immediately said: “Come for the benefits; stay for the opportunities.”

In just eight words, Tri-Met communicated that it was a great place to work now - and a place that gives people the opportunity for future advancement.