

# Nebraska Transit Trends

## NATP MEMBERS ATTEND 21ST TRB CONFERENCE

Monterey, California, was the setting for this year's 21st Annual National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation, held October 26-29. This year's theme was "Setting the Course for the Future." NATP Executive Director Tiffany Fougeron attended the conference along with scholarship award winners Charles McGraw, Beth Siegfried and Cindy Sanders. Other NATP members who attended included Joyce Deavers, Coletta Clouse, Scott Bartels and Jonnie Kusek.

The conference consisted of numerous workshops, breakout sessions, time with exhibitors, and different entertainment options and meals. The view at the conference certainly made for an excellent learning environment.

Most Nebraska attendees arrived on Saturday; unfortunately, some experienced some problems with their transportation. Beth, Joyce and Coletta experienced the frustration of missing their connecting flight in Phoenix to Monterey after their plane from Denver couldn't quite make it to the gate in time. Most of the group was able to meet up for dinner later that evening.



TRB attendees Joyce Deaver, Abe Anshasi, Coletta Clouse, Beth Siegfried, Charles McGraw, Jonnie Kusek & Tiffany Fougeron take some time with the vendors.

The conference started off on Sunday afternoon with an opening reception. This was an excellent opportunity to chat with others from around the country, staff from the event, and exhibitors.

On Monday morning, conference co-chairs Jacklyn Montgomery and Pattie Monahan welcomed attendees to the event and introduced keynote speaker Andrew Evans from National Geographic. Evans described his adventure of taking public transportation all the way to Antarctica. With no advanced planning, he boarded a bus in Washington, D.C. and proceeded to make

his way south. He encountered numerous obstacles along the way, but after two months he made it to his destination.

After the keynote, attendees had the opportunity to attend three educational sessions. For lunch, FTA Acting Administrator Therese McMillan presented awards. After the last session of the day, a reception was held with the vendors. This was a great time to learn more about their products and services and inform them about the NATP Managers Workshop.

Tuesday featured different roundtable discussions, numerous breakout sessions, bus show luncheon and an "Evening by the Sea" at the Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Wednesday featured a few key sessions and the conference closed at noon.

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# NATP PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings to All,

I hope everyone enjoyed the Thanksgiving holiday and took the opportunity to reflect upon all that is right in your world. Now that Christmas and New Year's Day are fast approaching, I want to wish everyone "Happy Holidays." And for the board and the association members, I want to welcome Tiffany Fougeron to her new appointment as Executive Director of NATP. Tiffany has worked with us extensively in the past and has transitioned into this position very well. We look forward to working with her on some exciting new projects. More details will be released as they develop.

It has been a very hectic year for me with Saline County Area Transit's building project now nearing completion, a year packed with training and networking opportunities, and a restructuring of NATP's purpose and significance to its members seemingly just beginning. I feel that transit's future looks good as a result of intended coordination and advocating for the great services public transit provides. We're letting government officials know about the resources that are necessary to continue and expand services to meet growing demand.

One such event took place in November at the State Capitol when the Aging Nebraskans Task Force held a public hearing to address the needs of the aging population in Nebraska. Testimony at the hearing clearly emphasized that much work needs to be done to meet the needs of older Nebraskans. Discussion revolved around problems with accessing assistance through ACCESSNebraska, the need to set up a one-stop shop such as an Aging & Disability Resource Center, quality assurance issues and the costs associated with long-term care and end of life health issues.

One point that became clear is that there needs to be a partnership between healthcare professionals and public transportation providers, with the first group providing the care and the transportation group providing access to that care.

Some of Saline County Area Transit's most recurring requests for service come from patients needing dialysis, cancer, or physical therapy treatments. The importance of public transportation for these medical out-patients cannot be overstated.

Public transportation is a cost effective way to keep patients – especially elderly patients – healthy and independent. Often it is the assurance of having transportation available when and where they need it that allows our elderly citizens to remain in their home.

Demographic projections indicate that Nebraska's population of individuals 65 or older will grow from 246,277 in 2010 to 324,697 in 2020 – a 31.6% increase (Legislature Planning Committee Report 2014).

We need to acknowledge that healthcare and non-emergency medical transportation demands will continue to be a challenge as Nebraska's demographics change, but by healthcare professionals and transportation providers working together, that challenge can be met. How? By designing transportation in our communities that is easily accessible, well marketed (so that potential users are aware of its availability), and convenient to EVERYONE, including disabled and older Nebraskans.

By providing effective, efficient public transportation, we help rural communities thrive. Our services are relied upon not just for health care, but for work, social engagements, shopping, education, and much more. Public transportation needs to provide easy access to the things



seniors, and all passengers, need in everyday life.

I recently read an article about a national Harris Interactive Poll. The poll stated that over 80% of the older Americans that were questioned agreed that public transportation provides easy access to doctors appointments, entertainment, shopping, and visits with family and friends. Eighty-two percent that were asked considered transit to be a better alternative to driving alone or at night. It went on to declare that without public transportation, "too many seniors perceive the move away from driving as one toward immobility, dependence, and a loss of self-sufficiency. Sadly, some of their perceptions are supported by the facts. Once seniors lose access to a car, they are 15 percent less likely to go see their doctor, 59 percent less likely to hop over to the supermarket, shopping mall or local restaurant, and 65 percent less likely to make social outings." Some CTA research has indicated that in rural communities more than a third of transit riders are seniors, far exceeding their proportion of the overall rural population.

At its current maturing rate, 20 percent of the US population will be older than 65 by 2020. Most of these seniors will never have had mobility limitations in their lifetime. Effective transit planning can provide continued mobility for these seniors while also serving disabled, youth, and all other segments of our communities.

Until next time, safe travels everyone.

Scott Bartels  
NATP President

## SUMMARY FROM AGING NEBRASKANS TASK FORCE PUBLIC HEARING

Nebraska's population of individuals 65 years or older is projected to grow from 246,277 in 2010 to 324,697 in 2020 - a 31.6% increase. As a state, we must plan for this demographic change, not only to respond to the needs of seniors but also to respond to the needs of the family members who care for them.

NATP was invited to testify at the Aging Nebraskans Task Force public hearing on November 13 at the Nebraska State Capitol.

Charles McGraw was on hand to testify in Lincoln. Scott Bartels was in attendance in Lincoln as well. Jonnie Kusek participated remotely in Chadron.

*I presented information regarding public transportation to the Aging Nebraskans Task force. There were many presenters from all areas of Human Services. Mark Intermill from AARP discussed the importance of this committee and the need for Aging and Disability Resource Centers. I presented some information on Mobility Management - to link all transportation resources together for maximum efficiency. Second, I addressed the need for coordinated transportation. I shared some statistics about RYDE Transit and the 3 C's of transportation coordination: communication, cooperation, and collaboration.*

*I gave them the example of our Franklin/Webster County coordinated transportation plan and the Gering/Scottsbluff project. The task force heard from me about public transportation in Nebraska and how the funding for the operation of transportation happens. The committee asked me about my system, coordination of rides, and concerns about insurance liabilities.*

Charles McGraw  
NATP Board Member  
West Central Region

## NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY OFFICIALS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Nebraska Association of County Officials held its annual conference on December 10-12, 2014, at the CenturyLink Center in Omaha.

NATP participated as a vendor in the exhibit hall. An updated display, banner, handouts and giveaway items were available for attendees.

NATP board members Scott Bartels and Jeff Baker and executive director, Tiffany Fougeron, were on hand to

speak with county officials and discuss transportation issues and benefits in their areas. They also discussed the mission of NATP and provided insight on our new goals and vision for the future.

On Wednesday morning, NATP board members met with staff from NDOR and the University to discuss the marketing plan for the 2015 Public Transit Week.

Watch for more information soon!



## CHARLES MCGRAW TO SERVE AS CTAA STATE DELEGATE

Charles McGraw from RYDE Transit in Kearney was elected to serve as the CTAA State Delegate for Nebraska. CTAA members in each state elect a State Delegate to represent them on the State Delegate Council, which acts as an advisory body to the Board

of Directors. The roles of the individual State Delegate, as well as the collective role of the Council, are key to building a strong and responsive national organization.

Delegates are the organization's

principal link to the membership. State delegates are expected to communicate with their elected Board members and to carry out various responsibilities.

Congratulations Charles!



# STARTRAN RECEIVES \$2 MILLION FEDERAL GRANT

Lincoln Mayor Chris Beutler and StarTran officials announced that the Federal Transit Administration has awarded a \$2 million Ladders of Opportunity grant to StarTran, the City's transit system. StarTran will use the grant funds to buy three buses and two downtown trolleys that run on compressed natural gas (CNG) as well as a bus driving simulator.

"The Ladders of Opportunity Initiative supports the modernization and expansion of bus service," Beutler said. "The goal is to connect disadvantaged and low-income residents with the vital services they need to improve their lives - services like education, employment, job training and health care. The grant process was very competitive - only 24 transit systems in the U.S. were selected to share in the \$100 million in grants."

Mokhtee Ahmad, the Regional Administrator for Region 7 of the FTA, attended the announcement, and Beutler thanked the FTA for its continued support of StarTran. Ahmad said FTA received 446

project proposals from 282 applicants for the grant.

"Priority was given to projects that provide ready access to work for individuals lacking reliable transportation, especially in low-income and under-served neighborhoods," Ahmad said. "At the Regional FTA Office in Kansas City, we have always had a wonderful working relationship with StarTran. We are excited that Lincoln is a recipient of these funds to help enhance bus transportation opportunities in the community."

The mayor also thanked Black Hills Energy for its cash match commitment of \$28,000 to the purchase. Black Hills also helped the city purchase its first five CNG buses earlier this year. StarTran Transit Manager Michael Davis said CNG buses are less expensive to operate, better for the environment and safer. He said StarTran's fleet of CNG vehicles will grow to 29 over the next two years. Davis said he plans to have the procurement of these grant-

funded CNG buses completed within one year. The new vehicles will replace vehicles that have surpassed their 12-year usable life. The full-size buses will be used on routes with a high number of low-income patrons. He said the bus-driving simulator will be StarTran's first, and it will help improve safety by enhancing the driver training. The simulator replicates the driving component of a typical bus and uses video displays of real driving experiences.

More information on StarTran is available at [startran.lincoln.ne.gov](http://startran.lincoln.ne.gov) or 402-476-1234.



## NATP MEMBERS ATTEND 21ST TRB CONFERENCE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

### Charles McGraw - Scholarship Recipient

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the TRB Conference. I appreciate the opportunity to attend this conference and represent Nebraska and RYDE Transit.

The theme for this year's conference was "Setting our Course for the Future." Indeed, all transit managers need to identify what the course is for their transit system in the future.

Monday's conference agenda included keynote speaker Andrew Evans, a photographer with National Geographic. Andrew spoke of his travels from Washington, D.C. to Antarctica. Andrew took public transportation the whole 12,000 mile, two-month trip. Andrew shared many pictures that brought the message home to what all transit managers deal with. On Monday, I attended a workshop on ethics in the workplace. Jill Hough from North Dakota State University challenged our ethics with many scenarios.



Later, I spoke with Therese McMillan, the Federal Transit Administrator from Washington, D.C. Therese and I talked about Nebraska transit and the operations of RYDE Transit. That afternoon I attended a session about travel training and how to educate our consumers on public transit. That evening ended with a vendor reception meeting and speaking with the vendors about their new products.

Tuesday's conference highlights included a session on providing health care in rural transit. Easter Seals, an administrator from a St. Louis Hospital, and a gentleman from the University of Kansas spoke about access to healthcare. The University of Kansas representative spoke about their traveling "WellCar" which will change how our consumers use public transportation for medical appointments. The last session that day was about environmental justice and Title VI. These speakers talked about court cases involving Title VI and EJ. The day rounded out with a session on funding measures and what all transit managers should know. That evening, conference attendees went to the Monterey Bay Aquarium for networking and an evening meal.

Wednesday was a day I was skeptical about staying for, and it proved to be one of the most useful. John Stambaugh from the Governmental Accounting Office spoke to us about some research his office had done at Congress's request. He also explained how his office initiates an audit from his office. The last session was a roundtable discussion on topics from the Federal Transit Administration. I was glad that I stayed the extra day to attend both of these sessions. Overall, this was the best session that I attended.

Thank you to the NATP Board and NDOR for selecting me and sponsoring my scholarship to the TRB Conference. I appreciate the opportunity to attend and represent Nebraska and RYDE Transit.

### Jonnie Kusek - TRB Attendee

As I am quite passionate about intercity bus usage in Nebraska, most of my Monday sessions revolved around that particular topic. Many sessions included

state/multi-state intercity bus transportation needs, re-establishing rural intercity systems that had previously been left completely to the private sector, public/private partnerships, network studies and the next phase of Growing "Up", Not "Out" for Minnesota's intercity bus development. As their state's rural network has stabilized, their program is shifting its focus from growing "out" toward growing "up" by improved quality service through capital investments, marketing, passenger data collection, coordination, etc. The session highlighted study results regarding riders' opinions, public perception, data results and what their plans are for the future.



Monday's sessions focused on successful partnerships in rural and intercity bus transportation. These relationships can have immediate and lasting effects for those involved. There was discussion on how ridership must be increased as distances cannot be shortened to make routes more viable. Dialogue was held regarding the rural needs of volunteerism as a transportation option for fulfilling hard-to-meet travel needs. Lastly, there was a great session on "Weaving It Together." This presentation showcased several success stories in using private and public support to meet community transportation needs.

Tuesday began with a roundtable discussion on the changes to the Section 5311/5311(f) since MAP-21. The morning continued with engaging perspectives on rural and intercity bus transportation from leaders in the industry



# NATP MEMBERS ATTEND 21ST TRB CONFERENCE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

including: Therese McMillan, FTA Administrator; Charles Dickson, associate director of CTAA; Rich Weaver, Director of Planning, Policy and Sustainability of the APTA; and Peter Pantuso, President and CEO of the American Bus Association.

The morning continued with a focus on transportation and healthcare. These segments included information ranging from providing access to healthcare in rural transit, raising awareness of transportation alternatives for older adults, the opportunities and challenges of the Affordable Care Act on rural transportation to the "WellCar" and how it may impact non-emergency medical transportation in rural areas as we proceed into the future.

Tuesday afternoon brought great data and innovation to the discussions regarding market research, service planning and marketing and how they work together to achieve maximum ridership results. Other sessions provided perspective about rural transit, why people use it or need it and how technology plays an integral part in today's research, planning, marketing and ridership. The afternoon sessions ended with traditional and non-traditional performance measures in funding decisions, garnering local support to assist elected officials in understanding investment impacts within

communities and cost benefit analysis of rural and small urban transit systems.



Transit "nerds" Beth Siegfried, Charles McGraw and Tiffany Fougerson check out the stores along historic Cannery Row.

I had the opportunity to meet Mary Leary, director of FTA Rural and Targeted Programs, and enjoyed a brief conversation regarding the conference and the support we receive from NDOR concerning the development and identification of needs for intercity bus usage in Nebraska.

Tuesday's "Evening by the Sea" at the Monterey Bay Aquarium was fun and the food was great!

Wednesday brought us John Stambaugh, senior analyst of the US Governmental Accounting Office, and Heather MacLeod, assistant director of GAO, to begin an interactive forum identifying key barriers and potential solutions for hot topics that affect transit in rural America. Notes on the comments presented at the meeting will be compiled as a tool for future policy setting and possible research topics. Also, this session brought great contact information for our local transit system and our fellow transit providers in South Dakota and the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. As part of "setting the course for our future" in western Nebraska,

our hope is that there will one day be an intercity transportation system that will connect our communities with one another and our bordering states. I also attended the FTA Mini-States Program. I would have to say that even though Wednesday was a shorter day, it was probably my favorite.

This was an unforgettable trip to the TRB Conference. The networking and learning opportunities were priceless.

## Joyce Deaver- TRB Attendee

I felt the networking was beneficial. It also gave me a change to get to know the Nebraska transit managers better and share common needs and successes. The event was very organized and of course, the weather was beautiful.

## Cindy Sanders- NATP Scholarship Recipient

I would like to thank NATP for the scholarship allowing my attendance at the 21st National Conference in Monterey. There were several sessions of interest to me, but the "Ethics in the Workplace" session really made me think. We are faced with moral and ethical situations daily, both personally and professionally. I believe it would benefit all of us to take a close look at our own Code of Ethics.

## Beth Siegfried- NATP Scholarship Recipient

Thanks again for the opportunity to attend the TRB Conference. What an adventure! It wasn't quite Trains, Planes and Automobiles, but it was cars, planes, shuttles and taxis. I missed my first plane ever through no fault of my own. We arrived early into Phoenix to meet up with Cindy, her husband and Tiffany. We were early so another plane was at our gate, then when we were able to get to



## NATP MEMBERS ATTEND 21ST TRB CONFERENCE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

our gate, the jet way would not extend. By the time we were towed to another gate and hurried to our connecting flight gate, the plane was pulling away. Joyce, Coletta, a sweet elderly couple from Denver, and I proceeded to the customer service counter to find out what our alternatives were. The best choice was to catch a later flight to San Jose and be shuttled to the Monterey airport where we could pick up our luggage that had made the plane and made it on time. With this detour we got to see the salad bowl of America which was interesting; met some more interesting people; learned a new meaning of customer service; and had a lot of down time to visit. The conference hotel was beautiful it was located right on the beach with nice amenities and wonderful food.

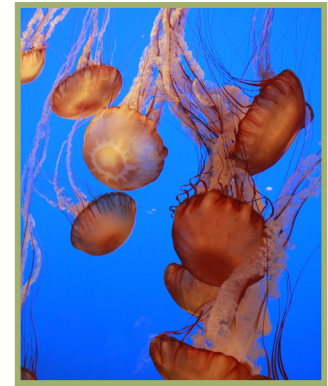
The opening speaker for the conference was amazing. His name is Adam Evans with National Geographic. If you have a chance look him up at @wheresandrew on Twitter or AndrewEvans.org and read about his adventures.

It was made clear to me again that we truly are a small transit system with one bus when I sat next to the gentleman from Los Angeles. He told me about his operation. I

question if they really know what rural is when they make comments about the waste of individuals owning their own automobiles. They do not understand the concept of being a hundred miles from a regional hospital or that we don't have public transit systems interlinking everyone in our state. It was interesting talking and learning about other countries in Europe and hearing about their amazing transit systems. However, to keep things in context you have to remember that some of these countries may only be 80 miles across. The vast distances we have in our country definitely set us apart. One session I attended explained about how they are matching people with destinations; it would be the modern day equivalent to hitchhiking. You would stand at designated busy intersections and hold up a sign printed with your desired destination. This is a very interesting concept. They said the statistic showed it is a safe way to travel; however, I don't think I left that session fully convinced.

I attended a workshop on ethics in the workplace that was thought provoking and I also attended many other worthwhile sessions. After listening to Élan Flippin with the Federal Transit Administration,

I was reminded how great the need is for the United States to put more money into our infrastructure. I was reminded how important it is for us to communicate with state senators, congressmen and local senators for our individual districts to continue to educate them on the services we provide and how important they are, especially to our elderly and disadvantaged.



One of the most important and enjoyable parts of the trip was getting to spend time getting to know Coletta, Cindy, Tiffany, Charles, Scott, Joyce and Jonnie better; laughing with them, learning from them and sharing ideas. Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

## LARRY OSSOWSKI RETIRES AFTER 26 YEARS AS DIRECTOR OF BLUE RIVERS AREA AGENCY ON AGING

Larry Ossowski retired on November 28 after 26 years as director of Blue Rivers Area Agency on Aging. Larry was promoted from fiscal officer to director at Blue Rivers in 1988. He became a board member of the Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers that same year and served on the board for 25 years. He spent 13 years as Board President.

Blue Rivers serves five counties in southeast Nebraska with demand-response transportation services. Fifty-four communities

can use and connect to the service. There are 21 vehicles in operation that travel approximately 210,000 miles and provide about 55,000 trips annually.

Larry is most proud of adding two inter-city transportation routes in 1994. The western route serving Gage, Jefferson, and Thayer Counties travels to Lincoln three days per week. The eastern route serving Nemaha and Otoe Counties travels to Lincoln two day per week and to Omaha one day per week. The development of these inter-city routes allowed the local buses to remain within

the local communities providing transportation. The local buses also serve as a shuttle to connect individuals to the inter-city buses.

Larry and his wife, Bev, are starting his retirement by buying a different house to remodel.

Jill Cammack took over as transportation director on December 1. She has been with Blue Rivers for 10 years and has assisted Larry with hiring and driver training.



## NORTH PLATTE TRANSIT ON BOARD WITH FACEBOOK PAGE

Sami Erickson noticed there was a Facebook page for North Platte Public Transit, but it hadn't been used consistently. Erickson, who drives the set route bus for the city, decided she wanted to change that.

"I don't think people realize how much of a marketing tool it is," she said.

Her mother, Marilee Hyde, is the manager of the public transit, and was all for her daughter building a social media relationship with riders, other local organizations and events. Erickson has done Facebook feeds for the two arts and crafts shows that public transit sponsors, Arts in the Park and Spring Fling, and Hyde noticed a lot more interest generated by both vendors and participants.

It made sense to create more of a web presence for public transit, too — contrary to misconceptions, Hyde said, not all of the bus users are elderly and disabled. In fact, of the 300 or so people transported by the bus fleet each day, many are school age or working and own a smartphone or have computer access.



*Sami Erickson stands outside one of North Platte Public Transit's buses in the bus barn. She holds a sign promoting the organization's new Facebook campaign — a like and a share means a free round-trip ride*

"We transport everyone," Hyde said. "There's hardly any day we aren't busy anymore."

Hyde said the buses drop off and pick up students at all of the public schools and St. Patrick's School during the school week, and they often take college students to classes at North Platte Community College. A lot of riders are headed to work, too.

"Our main goal is for people to know how convenient it is to use public transit," Hyde said.

The Facebook page acts like an easy website, she said. Hours of

operation, contact information and news updates can be posted there all together. During the winter, it's an important way to get information to riders — if the buses aren't running because of snow, for example.

Or else, it could be used in the future to promote rides during events, like NebraskaLand Days and Rail Fest.

Right now, a like and a share on the site means a free ride. Erickson said she also plans on doing more feature-type pieces on drivers and other employees. Yesterday, for example, she posted a photo of Rhonda Keller, one of the dispatchers. The post generated 22 likes and one share, one of the most popular on the page. There have been only 107 likes so far, but Erickson said she knows it takes time to build a following.

But if the page expands to bringing in more riders, the business can expand, too. In the future, Hyde said she hopes to get North Platte a 24/7 transit service.

*This article was reprinted with permission from the North Platte Telegraph.*

## WELCOME NEW MEMBER!

NATP would like to welcome Garden County Transportation as a new member of the Nebraska Association of Transportation Providers. Tammy McConnell is the manager for the new system.

Tammy has kept busy setting up the brand new transit department for Garden County. The first ride occurred at the end of August.

Tammy moved to Oshkosh from Fort Collins, Colorado, in June of this year. She had previously

worked for Yellow Cab for one and a half years running a wheelchair van and assisting the scheduler/dispatcher.

"It's been a huge and overwhelming task but extremely gratifying," she said.

We are delighted to have Tammy and Garden County Transportation as part of our association and look forward to seeing her at our future events!



*Tammy McConnell*



## NATP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE

Hello everyone! This time around I'm greeting you as your executive director! I'm excited to step into this position as I have learned so much from Kathi and have been able to get to know more about NATP and the members.

There are many changes coming soon. The board has worked very hard to determine the direction that NATP should take and has come up with new and exciting ideas.

One of those ideas is an updated version of the Legislative Day. In the past, we've had about 12-15 members attend and hand out informational brochures and giveaway items to the senators at the Capitol. In 2015, we are planning to change this. We would like to offer an educational session on the afternoon of the first day and a Legislative Breakfast (Meet & Greet) and proclamation signing on the second day. The Legislative Breakfast would provide an opportunity for members to establish relationships with Senators and allow them to get to know you.

The proclamation signing would declare a certain week in April as Public Transit Week. This is very exciting! The board and



*Enjoyed the California coastline!*

staff are working with NDOR and the University of Nebraska on a marketing campaign for the week. We will provide members with information, ideas, press releases and more. This will be a great opportunity to bring positive publicity to public transit and give you local recognition and support.

Watch for more information coming soon! The date has not been established due to scheduling conflicts that occur when a new governor takes office, but I believe the date will be set in March for the legislative event and Public Transit Week will occur in April.

I was able to attend the TRB Conference in Monterey in October. This was a great experience for me. I have attended CTAA Expo's, but this was a little different.

Not only did I appreciate the educational opportunity, but I truly enjoyed the opportunity to get to know the members who attended. I email and call many of you, but I don't always get the opportunity to really get to know you. I was able to spend a lot of time with Coletta, Beth, Joyce, Cindy, Jonnie, Charles and Scott. What a great group! It was also fun to see Mokhtee carry around an NATP messenger bag - always good to see our logo appear in various places (even California!).

I encourage you to send me news, interesting facts, accomplishments, and more about your transit system. It's important to let others know what you're up to, pass along ideas, and learn from each other. Also, be sure to like our Facebook page! Let me know if your system has a page and I'll be sure to like it, too!

Thanks for all you do for public transit. I look forward to seeing you at future events!

Tiffany Fougeron  
Executive Director

## KARI RUSE HONORED

Ten NDOR employees were recognized by Governor Dave Heineman for their accomplishments as Employee of the Year and Supervisor/Manager of the Year. They joined outstanding state employees from other state agencies during recognition ceremonies held on October 28 at the State Capitol Rotunda.

Kari Ruse received Manager of the Year for the Rail and Public Transportation Division.

Each year, agencies select one non-management/nonsupervisory employee per 500 from their agency whose job performance has exceeded the highest standards and contributed to the overall effectiveness of their agency.

Congratulations Kari!

*Information taken with permission from The Roadrunner.*



*Kari Ruse*

# FOR TRANSIT OPERATORS: FACTS ABOUT EPILEPSY AND SEIZURES

*This article was reprinted from the METRO Magazine online blog. View this blog and more at [www.metro-magazine.com](http://www.metro-magazine.com).*

*Contributed by Easter Seals Project ACTION.*

Approximately one in 26 Americans will develop epilepsy at some point in their lives, and as a result, may not be able to drive. Public transportation can be an important resource for people with epilepsy — to help them stay active and connected with their community. Because a passenger may experience a seizure while using public transportation, it is important to know the warning signs of seizures and be prepared to respond appropriately. This is particularly important for public transportation vehicle operators.

Easter Seals Project ACTION and the Epilepsy Foundation recently produced a pocket guide, titled "Seizure Disorder Awareness for Transportation Operators & Customers," to offer tips and information about riding transit and seizure safety for transportation operators and customers.

## Signs of Seizures

Epilepsy, also called a seizure disorder, is a neurological, medical condition. Seizures can be thought of as electrical overloads in the brain and can take many forms. Some are brief and hardly noticeable, whereas others present as convulsions that can be upsetting to those who see people

having them. Some common behaviors that occur during a seizure include:

- Staring ahead without response to verbal commands or conversation.
- Losing awareness, losing consciousness or becoming confused.
- Experiencing stiffness of limbs and/or shaking of limbs — this is also called a convulsion.
- Experiencing a change in emotional state.
- Picking at and/or fiddling with items in a purposeless way.
- Using inappropriate language or agitated aggressive behavior.
- Falling.

## Key Facts to Know

Important epilepsy facts for transit operators to know include dispelling the myth that a person can swallow his tongue during a seizure. The Epilepsy Foundation recommends never putting objects, like pens or a wallet, in someone's mouth while they are having a seizure. The items may cause injury to the person's teeth and gums. It is best to turn the person on his side to decrease the chance of his breathing in saliva. However, do not risk injury to the person if it is difficult to turn him on his side. Do allow the person to rest on his side after the seizure until he is ready to get up.

## How to Respond

Some people can become agitated and combative during and after seizures. They are not aware of what they are doing. Agitation

can happen when a person becomes confused during or after a seizure. Do not forcibly restrain the person having the seizure. Remain calm and remove objects in the immediate area that might injure the person, like strollers and packages. Try to guide the person to a safe position. Once the seizure is over and the person is fully awake, help them into a resting position.

People who experience seizures on public transportation cannot be asked to leave the vehicle or be denied a ride. If you are an operator, refer to U.S. Department of Transportation Americans with Disabilities Act regulations and your agency's service policies for more information. There is no reason a person who has fully recovered from a seizure cannot stay on the bus until she arrives at her destination. If the person is traveling with a service animal, the service animal should remain with the individual and is protected under the ADA.

For questions related to seizure disorders, the ADA, and serving people with disabilities, contact the Epilepsy Foundation at (800) 332-1000 or Easter Seals Project ACTION at (800) 659-6428.



*The NATP office will be closed  
December 25-26 and January 1.*

*Enjoy the holidays with  
your friends and families!*



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**Next newsletter deadline is  
February 17, 2015**

Please send your articles and pictures for the Nebraska Transit Trends newsletter to the NATP office by **February 17, 2015**.

We want to know what all of our members are doing throughout the state. Also, if you see something newsworthy, be sure to let the office know. Submit your typed articles via email (as a word document) to the NATP office at **tfougeron@youraam.com**. You may include pictures if you like, but be sure to save them as a .jpeg file or they may not be included in the newsletter. Documents received after the deadline will appear in the next newsletter.

Visit Us On The Web!  
[www.neatp.org](http://www.neatp.org)

*Dates To Remember***March**

TBD Legislative Training/  
Breakfast/Proclamation  
Signing  
Lincoln, NE

**April**

TBD Public Transit Week  
Statewide

**June, 2015**

May 31- June 5  
CTAA EXPO  
Tampa, FL

June 23-25 (tentative)  
Managers Workshop  
Hastings

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