



# TRANSREPORT

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ILLINOIS RURAL TRANSIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FALL 2014

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## Upcoming Events:

- December 24, 2014—January 1, 2015  
RTAC office will be closed
- March 5-6, 2015  
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs  
Rural Community Economic Development  
Conference, Peoria
- April 1-2, 2015  
RTAC Spring Conference, Springfield

On-Site Driver Training and  
Classroom Driver Training  
(Call RTAC: 800.526.9943)



RTAC is a unit of the  
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## RTAC Notes



The National Center for Transportation Research has released the October 2014 report "Evaluating the State of Mobility Management and Human Service Transportation Coordination," extensively researched and containing a history of past efforts as well as a list of obstacles and examples of success. The report itself is fine, but over the past thirty five years many similar reports with the same results have been released. I am not faulting the authors for reporting fact, but I find it distressing that the status of public transportation service coordination seems to never change. As a rural transit consultant with many years in this business has said more than once, "They were working on coordination when I came into this field and they will be working on it long after I'm gone."

Especially bothersome is the list of obstacles discussed in this new report, which include: regulatory barriers, lack of uniformity with respect to measures, potential users not having knowledge of services available, provider agencies unwilling to coordinate services, provider concerns "that laws will prohibit the interaction of specific passengers," and many more like those, including "organizations are used to working as independent providers." As in all the other past reports, it is noted "that while obstacles exist, they have all been addressed in one community or other." That is the crux of the coordination problem. From the bottom up, the local level, there are examples of successful coordination efforts; from the top down, at the federal and state level, not really.

Of federal coordination efforts, the new report rightfully states, "The failure of non-FTA programs to encourage coordination is one of the major shortcomings of federal leadership reported by state and local officials that were interviewed as part of our performance audit."

Of state coordination efforts, the report offers, "As of 2010, 26 states had coordinating councils... These councils serve as a focal point for advocating better transportation through coordination, and they are usually responsible for creating inventories of services, conducting needs assessments, and determining how gaps should be filled (National Council of State Legislators, 2010)." Sounds good on paper, but an inventory of services only tells us where to call or go to try to get a ride, not whether or not a ride is possible. And needs assessments only tell us what we already know, that transportation services are needed. Then we come to the determinations about how gaps should be filled, which do not equate to gaps being filled unless the various players are willing to change their current practices. Some are and some aren't. The bottom line: the existence of a state coordinating council doesn't necessarily correlate to service coordination. Take Illinois, for example.

—RTAC Notes continued on page 3

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Illinois has the Interagency Coordinating Committee on Transportation (ICCT). We haven't met in nearly five years. And during the last several years when we did meet, we heard status reports and warm stories from state agencies about how everything was functioning so well. No substantive action to effect change at the state agency level ever occurred in the ICCT. The one and only change to occur was focused at the bottom up or local level. The ICCT designated a clearinghouse which subsequently facilitated a transit capacity building process which, due to efforts of local partners, eventually resulted in nearly every county in Illinois having some type of public transportation service by 2015.

The bottom-up progress occurred because those local partners (rural public and specialized transit grantees, government bodies, and citizens) were willing to change the status quo. Those local efforts are now complemented nicely with regional coordination and mobility management efforts via the Human Service Transportation Plan (HSTP) coordinators, as change continues. The bottom up partners went beyond talk. They took action through local champions.

So what needs to happen to achieve top down coordination successes?

First, the federal government should cease ENCOURAGING coordination, instead EXPECTING it of any agency (FTA and non-FTA) providing transportation services. The FTA should increase its oversight of state programs and partner with non-FTA agencies to implement and enforce coordination policies. Encouraging grantees to play nice has not worked.

Secondly, the states have to quit making TOKEN EFFORTS. Only half of the states have coordinating councils. And in states that do, sometimes that means little beyond the fact that a coordinating council exists on record. I remember the early ICCT meetings in which the governor's office was engaged, which led to high level agency personnel attending. After we formulated a strategic plan, interest waned, the governor's office handed the reins to a co-chair, agency attendance was delegated to note-takers or guardians of the gates, and the aforementioned warm and fuzzy status report meetings occurred. The top down effort started with talk and stayed there, no champion to be found, no CHANGE in state level policies, and no meetings since early 2010. We can do better than that, and we should.

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## Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention Training

The National Transit Institute (NTI) is offering direct delivery and train-the-trainer classes on Infectious Disease Awareness and Prevention, which is designed to provide transit employees with the knowledge and skills to:

- Identify the types of infectious diseases they may encounter
- Discuss how these diseases are often spread
- Describe how they can protect themselves and others from these diseases
- Explain the proper way to dispose of and decontaminate infectious material or contaminated items and areas

To accomplish these objectives, the course integrates lecture, visual aids, participant interaction, and learning activities.

Direct Deliver: NTI will deliver this course directly to your employees. NTI provides the instructor free of charge. The requesting organization is responsible for providing a training location and audio/visual equipment. A minimum class size of twenty is required. Multiple sessions can be conducted over up to three consecutive days depending on the number of employees.

To request a session, download our Course Request Form at <http://www.ntionline.com/documents/WPSSCourseRequest.pdf> and email the completed form to Coleen Meyer at [cmeyer@nti.rutgers.edu](mailto:cmeyer@nti.rutgers.edu) or fax it to 732.932.1707.

This three hour Direct Delivery course is targeted at transit employees who work directly with the public and those responsible for cleaning, servicing, and maintaining transit vehicles and facilities.

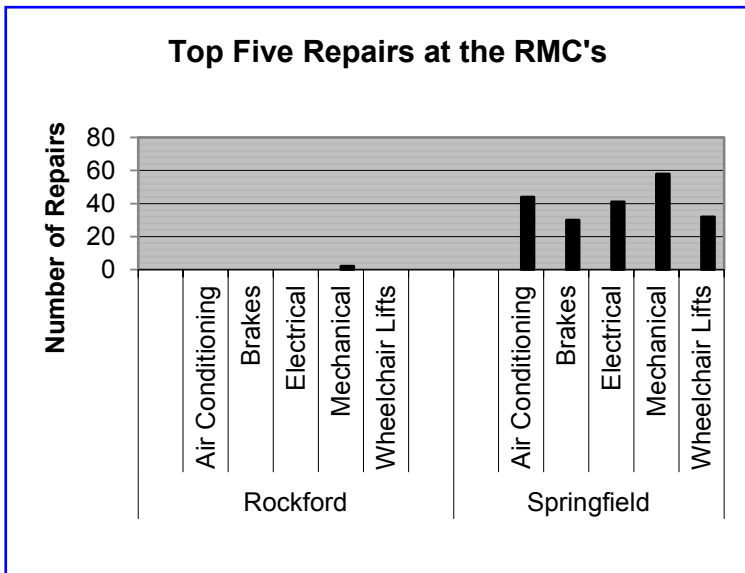
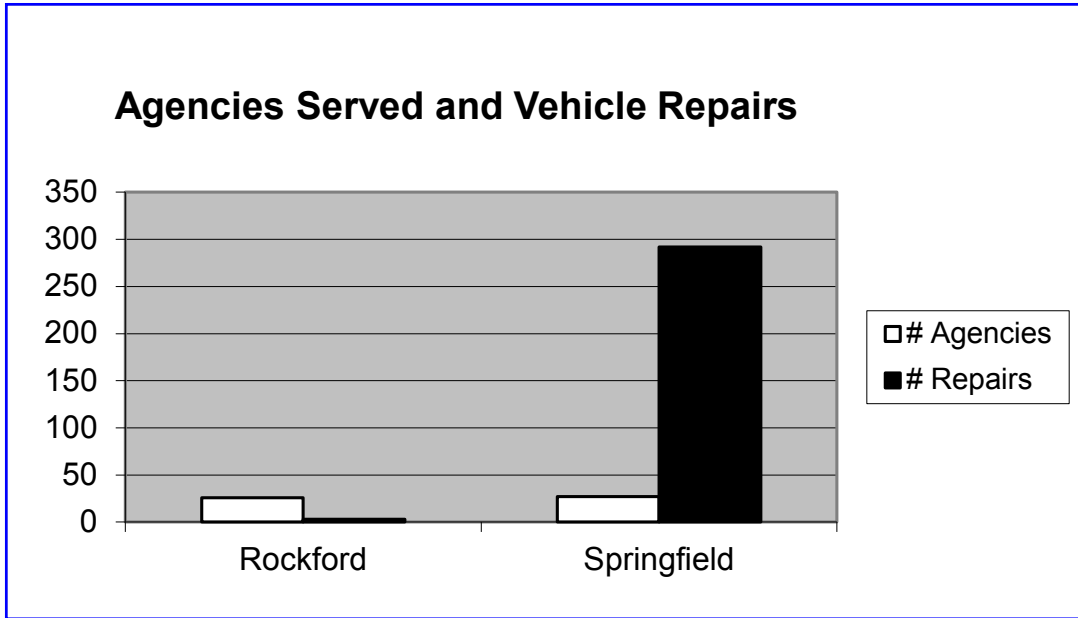
Contact Information:

Telephone: 848.932.6580 Email: [cmeyer@nti.rutgers.edu](mailto:cmeyer@nti.rutgers.edu)

Web site: <http://www.ntionline.com/courses/courseinfo.php?id=117>

# Regional Maintenance Center Fiscal Year 2014 Statistics

The IDOT Regional Maintenance Center (RMC) program serves as a maintenance resource for non-routine maintenance and repair. The program is open to all Section 5310 and 5311 grantees, and all non-profit social service agencies. To sign-up call Rockford, 815.961.2241; Springfield, 217.522.6087.



RMC	Five Top Repairs	# of Repairs
Rockford	Air Conditioning	0
	Brakes	0
	Electrical	0
	Mechanical	2
	Wheelchair Lifts	0
Springfield	Air Conditioning	44
	Brakes	30
	Electrical	41
	Mechanical	58
	Wheelchair Lifts	32



# Spotlight

In this edition we are spotlighting an individual instead of an agency. We've posed ten questions to Sheila Neiderhofer, managing director at South Central Transit (SCT), president of the Illinois Public Transportation Association, and chair of the Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Program Advisory Council.



1. How did you get started in rural transportation?

**I had been working at a local bank for 10 years and was ready for a change. I heard that South Central Transit had an opening for the executive assistant and thought I would apply and ended up getting the job; that was in 1998.**

2. If you didn't have a transit background, how did you learn the ropes?

**I learned from co-workers, listening to conversations at meetings, and attending RTAC and IPTA Conferences.**

3. Did you have a mentor in transit?

**Not really. I was new and did not know anyone. I think getting to know my peers and using them as sounding boards were my mentors.**

4. What is your toughest day-to-day operational problem?

**I think the transit side of the operations is the easiest part for me to deal with. Having 161 employees is the challenging side. The disappointing part is having more demand than we have equipment (buses) to meet that demand. We could do so much more if we had the resources.**

5. What's a typical day like?

**Most of my days consist of meetings; either planning for or preparing for them and answering lots of questions.**

6. What's your proudest achievement?

**Each and every time SCT breaks a ridership record. Increased ridership tells me that all the planning, meetings, setting up routes and hard work is paying off. I feel that by our ridership continuing to increase shows that SCT is growing, we are reaching out and connecting to the public and they are responding by using public transportation.**

7. What motivates you?

**Hearing stories from consumers who tell me that they don't know what they would do if it wasn't for SCT.**

8. What do you do to motivate your staff?

**I share the stories with them and praise their good work. The SCT work environment is family oriented and I feel that the employees appreciate that.**

9. What innovations have occurred since you began in transit?

— Spotlight continued on page 8

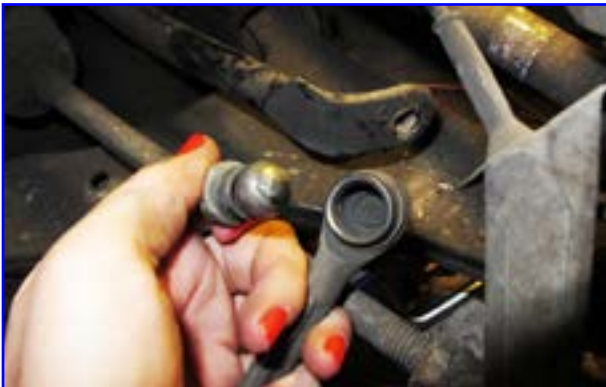
# Maintenance Safety Training Part Five

By Springfield Mass Transit District (SMTD)

This is the fifth in a series of maintenance/safety tips culled from presentations by the Springfield Regional Maintenance Center (RMC) at the annual maintenance workshops sponsored by RTAC. The Springfield RMC operates out of Springfield Mass Transit District (SMTD) Maintenance Facility.

Maintenance superintendent Earl Amos leads the nineteen technicians at SMTD who have a combined 268 years of experience. All of the techs are trained on SMTD mainline buses as well as the para-transit buses. Anytime a vehicle is worked on, whether it is SMTD's or not, SMTD is responsible for the safety of that vehicle. If a safety issue is found on an outside agency's vehicle, SMTD either fixes it or the agency signs a waiver. The SMTD techs don't know when they will see that vehicle next, so they want it to be 100 percent right when it leaves the shop.

Part Five covers suspension, underbody, and brakes by technicians Brett Cole and Spencer Sidwell.



The suspension, steering, brakes, and several other key safety components are located on the underside of the vehicle. The above picture shows a sway bar link that has come apart. Many of your steering and suspension components are similar due to their "ball and socket" construction. Factors such as age, abuse, and lack of grease can cause these components to fail.



This is a picture of a minivan in which the lower ball joint failed. When something is ignored to the point of catastrophic failure such as this, many other components can be damaged as well. In this case, there was even considerable body damage. In addition to physically checking steering and suspension components, one tell-tale sign of a problem is uneven tire wear.

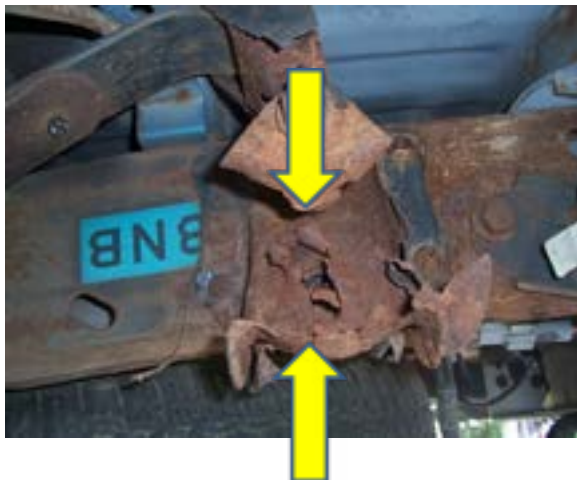


If tires are cupped or wearing unevenly, this is a sign that the vehicle needs front end repairs and possibly an alignment.

—SMTD continued on page 7



This is a broken leaf spring. Leaf springs are the part of the suspension that holds up the rear of the bus. A broken leaf is not an uncommon occurrence on paratransit vehicles due to the extra weight of the fiberglass body and the lift. If a broken leaf is detected, it adds more load to the other leaves, and should be repaired right away.



This is a picture of a rusted-out spring shackle bracket. The two arrows should actually be touching. Salt and calcium chloride on the Illinois roads are really hard on underbody components. Rusted-out spring shackles and brackets are fairly common but a lot of people don't think to check for it.



This picture shows the forward end of the spring where it is mounted to the bus frame by a bracket. The bracket has cracked and someone has attempted to weld it. This picture represents several things. The most obvious thing is the crack; whenever inspecting the underside of a bus, one should always be looking for cracks in the frame or any brackets. If a crack is found, the bracket should be replaced. Even though it is riveted on, it is not a difficult job to replace it. If there is a crack in the frame, it can be repaired by welding and plating it. This should only be done by a certified welder. The welding in this picture was not a professional job, which is most likely why it broke again.

## TRANSIT MOVERS

Transit Movers recognizes people in Illinois transit who have been promoted, changed responsibilities, moved to a different transit agency, etc. If there are people within your agency who fall into these categories, contact the RTAC staff at 800.526.9943, e-mail [rtac@wiu.edu](mailto:rtac@wiu.edu) or fax 309.298.2162. Please include pictures!



Tiffany Morgan recently accepted a position with Shawnee Mass Transit District as the operations manager. She was born and raised in Vienna, Illinois. Shortly after attending college Tiffany started her career in the Saint Louis area as a sales executive. She was promoted to a sales manager position and stayed with the company for ten years. Tiffany says, "Vienna has always been home to me and I look forward to being back here and serving the people in southern Illinois."

— Spotlight continued from page 5

**The best modernism that I have seen in the last 15 years is the automated scheduling software. When I started at SCT they were using paper and pencil. I created Excel spreadsheets, which were used for several years; however, the automated software brought efficiency. SCT now has Mobile Data Terminals (MTD) in the buses, which eliminated using tons of paper each year. And the MDT's include GPS. Having GPS gives new drivers an advantage that they didn't have before. The drivers now have cell phones for communication instead of the old Motorola radios, which only worked in certain areas. We have come a long way from the paper and pencil days.**

10. How has your system grown, and why?

**When I took over as managing director in 2006, SCT was a six-county district, but was only providing transportation in two of those counties. Today SCT is providing public transportation in all six counties, in addition to having deviated shuttles connecting each county. In 1998 SCT was averaging 26,000 trips per month; ridership for September of this year was 52,221. I contribute the success of SCT to the great staff that I have. They are dedicated to SCT and want to see it be very successful. SCT also has a great board of directors who accepts the changes that the staff and I recommend and are very supportive of the changes we are planning for the future.**

Editor's Note: If you have suggestions for other questions for transit professionals we will profile in the future, please contact us.





The top picture above is of one of the metal straps that hold the gas tank in place, and is another example of corrosion from the salt on the roads. The lower picture is of the gas tank with a new strap in place. Note that the corrosion has eaten into the tank and caused it to leak. This is important to check whenever doing an inspection.



Another important safety feature to check is the driveshaft safety loop. In the event of a broken u-joint, this will contain the driveshaft and keep it from pole-vaulting the bus or coming through the floor. A driveshaft flopping around at 55 mph can do an extreme amount of damage. Brett and Spencer have seen guys leave these off. They both say, "There is only one reason not to put this back on. That would be laziness! Always check to see that the safety loop is present and secure."



Brakes are probably the most important safety feature on a vehicle. Brakes should be inspected often and replaced if there is any doubt as to their condition. The above picture shows a new brake pad versus one that has been worn completely through. A brake pad consists of two parts, the metal back and the lining. This pad has the lining worn clear through to the metal back. This condition is often referred to as "metal to metal". Brakes should never be allowed to get to this point.



Above are some worn brake pads. The first one is just worn thin. It was taken off before it wore into the metal back. The second one is not only thin, but grooved. Most generally a grooved pad is the result of someone putting new pads on a damaged rotor. Any time a brake job is done, the rotors should be measured for thickness and then either machined (turned) or replaced if they are too thin.



Here is an example of a new rotor compared to an old one. The flat smooth surface of the new rotor provides much greater stopping power.



The first picture above is a rotor that is warped and rusted. Putting new pads on something like this would cause the grooved pads we saw earlier. The second one is a rotor that has been run “metal to metal” for so long that it wore completely through the stopping surface of the rotor. Brett and Spencer say this is not a vehicle that came into SMTD, and they hope that one never does. They both say there is absolutely no excuse for this.

Remember, maintenance equals vehicle longevity, maintenance equals money savings, and most importantly, maintenance equals safety.

Part Six of the SMTD's Maintenance Safety Training will appear in the winter 2015 Transreport.



# Whiteside County Public Transportation's Wine Tasting Fundraiser



WCPT held its first annual Wine Tasting fundraiser on October 25, 2014 and we couldn't be happier with the outcome! Over the past few years, WCPT has had an increased demand for public transit in Whiteside County. Due to this, local match as become more important than ever. We actively seek out service contracts but decided it was time to try other options to obtain local match.

I contacted Mable Kreps, Rural Transit Assistance Center and asked her to contact many of you to see what my peers did for fundraising. I then spent some time discussing fundraising with Tom Zucker, Voluntary Action Center. He discussed various fundraisers with me that his organization does each year and I decided I would also go with a wine tasting. Wine tastings are rather unique here as the majority of fundraisers in our area are golf outings.



Once it was decided to hold a wine tasting, we began contacting members of our community for assistance and the help we received was amazing! Our first item to accomplish was a venue. I decided the Barn at Allen Acres in Rock Falls would be a perfect venue. The Barn at Allen Acres is a beautifully restored family owned barn that our community is lucky to have to host such events. To my surprise the owner, Karen Rogers offered this beautiful venue for our use at no charge. As we continued our planning efforts, we were overwhelmed by the generosity

of business owners in our community. Many of the items we needed to host our event were donated from various businesses across the county. Our event consisted of the wine tasting, a silent auction, and a 50/50 raffle. Our guest enjoyed various appetizers and live music from local bands.



Although this was a large undertaking and a significant amount of work, it was well worth it. It was amazing to see the amount of support our transit system received. Before this event, I had no experience with hosting fundraising events but our experience was favorable and it is something we now look forward to doing each year! I would encourage my peers to try a fundraising event as a source of local match as it draws positive attention to our services.



Sincerely,  
Tori McDaniel  
Director WCPT

Photographs were kindly donated by:



## Winter Emergency Preparedness Tips

Heavy snow, freezing rain, sleet, and high winds. Here we go again. Rural transit drivers and passengers are often on the road when this type of weather occurs, and how the drivers react can truly be a matter of life or death. It is safe to say that rural transit systems address how to drive in hazardous weather, but hopefully they also discuss what to do if the vehicle gets stranded. Several years ago The Federal Transit Administration, through the National Transit Institute at Rutgers University, published an Emergency Preparedness Guide for Transit Employees, which listed the following tips for stranded transit vehicles:

- Stay with the vehicle.
- At night turn on the vehicle interior lights so crews or rescuers can locate you.
- If stranded in a remote, rural area spread a large cloth over the snow to attract attention of rescue personnel.
- If you need to pull off the roadway, set your hazard lights to flash and remain in vehicle.
- Run the engine and heater about ten minutes each hour to keep warm. While the engine is running, slightly open a window and keep the exhaust pipe free of snow to minimize carbon monoxide risk. Be careful not to run vehicle battery down.

The guide also offered also offered some tips appropriate for any emergency:

- Remain calm, stay patient and be prepared to make key decisions as quickly as possible.
- Provide a specific, yet concise, description of the situation to your transit control center. Inform them of the site conditions and health status of you and your passengers.
- Listen for dispatchers' response and instructions and, if possible, listen to your radio for developing news.
- Inform and give passengers clear directions during the early stages of the emergency. Continue to update them frequently throughout the event.

The guide, which lists both "At Home" and "On the Job" emergency preparedness guidelines, can be ordered at [http://www.ntionlie.com/products/index.php?product\\_type=6](http://www.ntionlie.com/products/index.php?product_type=6)

If your agency would like to schedule a Defensive Driving course for your drivers, please contact Jacqueline Waters at 800-526-9943 or 309-298-3319. In addition, the RTAC lending library has a DVD which addresses winter driving, item number D-043.



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