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Upcoming Events:

April 6-7, 2016
RTAC Spring Conference, Springfield
On-Site Driver Training and
Classroom Driver Training
(Call RTAC: 800.526.9943)
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RTAC Notes
The RTAP advisory council recently formulated a tentative agenda for the 2016 spring conference. Three sessions will be panel discussions. In the coming weeks I will contact a cross section of Section 5311 grantee representatives regarding your possible participation on a panel. Some folks are a tad shy about sitting on a panel, and the number of grantees is far bigger than the number of slots available, but we will nevertheless strive for a good grantee mix (county, city, transit district) for these discussions.

The operations panels will discuss ideas for improving and promoting rural transit programs, detailed descriptions and definitions of types of service (demand response, point deviation, deviated fixed route, etc.), accountability (appropriate use of funds, IDOT definition of appropriate mix of service contracts and general public service), veterans transportation, efficiency standards (peer comparison), liability and insurance (options used by pass-through providers), communications strategies for dispatching rides for individuals with disabilities, and policies and procedures.

The Medicaid transportation panel will discuss what to expect during a Medicaid audit, expectations regarding claims denied for payment, and navigating DHS (administers the Non-Emergency Transportation Prior Approval Program) and HFS (pays the transportation provider).

The budget panel will discuss money saving measures (fuel contracts, etc.) and surviving the State of Illinois budget process (suggestions for reducing the transit system budget due to state budget cuts, when to shut down, logistics of shutting down, logistics of starting back up, how to plan for the next time this happens).

You can be part of the conference planning process by contacting me directly with specific topics you want these panels to address. I can’t guarantee that we will be able to incorporate every one of your suggestions, but we will do our best. Please submit your questions and comments within the next thirty days.

Due to the large number of newer grantees, as well as Program Compliance Oversight Monitor (PCOM) turnover, we will once again feature a PCOM session which addresses PCOM relationships with providers, PCOM responsibilities versus provider responsibilities, and PCOM reports (how does IDOT use them?). A driver and passenger safety session will address issues such as handling unruly

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IPTA Notes

On December 4, President Obama signed the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act into law, ending the trend of short term extensions. This bill was formed by a Conference Committee charged with negotiating an amalgamation of the House-passed Surface Transportation Reauthorization and Reform (STRR) Act and the Senate-passed Developing a Reliable and Innovative Vision for the Economy (DRIVE) Act. This bill is a fully funded, five-year surface transportation authorization, including funding for public transportation, highways, and rail. It is the first long-term surface transportation bill since the passage of SAFETEA-LU in 2005.

The FAST Act provides necessary growth in funding for transit programs over the five-year life of the bill. The five years of stable funding for FTA’s programs will allow transit systems to plan for the future and better manage their capital assets. The total authorization of funding for FTA programs is $61.113 billion over the life of the bill, representing a more than 10 percent increase in FY 2016 and a nearly 18 percent increase by the final year, FY 2020.

In addition to the funding authorized, the FAST Act includes many reforms that are meant to increase safety (increasing FTA’s safety oversight authority, even more so than in MAP-21), improve mobility, and streamline the execution of capital projects. The bill does not seem to include the popular TIGER program, but it does include funding for a new competitive grant program for buses and bus facilities. There is an increased emphasis on workforce training and innovative transportation coordination.

Funding for the Rural Area Formula (Sec. 5311) increases by 10.78 percent over current levels by the final year of the FAST Act. Those programs are funded at $620 million in FY 2016 and growing annually to $673.3 million in FY 2020. The Bus and Bus Facilities program saw a 62.5 percent increase over the current funding in the first year of the bill, and 89 percent over the five year span. These increases will go a long way in helping to begin bringing transit systems across the country into a state of good repair.

While the passage of the FAST Act is a huge success, in Illinois we are still faced with a state budget stalemate. It is important that our member transit systems continue to remind their state legislators of the importance of maintaining the current state funding levels for transit. IDOT is processing payments for operating assistance, and vouchers have been getting paid in a fairly reasonable amount of time, so that is positive. But so many desperately needed capital projects have been put on hold. Encourage your legislators to put pressure on their leaders and the Governor to come to an agreement, because the longer this stalemate continues, the larger the budget hole will become.

Laura Calderon
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 or fax 309.298.2162. Please include pictures!

**Drew Bargmann** is the special services manager for the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD). Drew is a Champaign native, attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and graduated in 2008 with a degree in Urban and Regional Planning.

After graduation, Drew began working at the District as a planner. In 2013, he began managing PARAtransit operations. During 2014, the District became the service operator for rural transportation services provided by Champaign County (C-CARTS), with Drew becoming the special services manager, managing both programs.

In his free time he enjoys watching soccer, cooking, home brewing beer, working on his home, and spending time with family. Drew lives in Champaign with his wife, Laura, and their son, Everett.

**Josh Mercer** was appointed as the Human Services Transportation planner for the Western Illinois Regional Council in the spring of this year. Josh grew up in Vermont, IL, attending VIT High School. Upon graduation he attended Spoon River College where he received his Associate degree and then transferred to Western Illinois University where he earned his Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in Sociology.

Josh joined Western Illinois Regional Council in 2005 where he started as a prevention educator in the Victim Services department. In 2014 he accepted a position as an assistant planner in the Planning department where he helped local communities by writing and administering grants for municipal infrastructure improvements.

Josh lives in Vermont with his wife, Anna, and their three children, Noah, Jonas, and Benjamin. He currently serves as the village president for Vermont. In his free time he enjoys hunting, fishing, biking and cooking.
JoLyn Kruse is the new Carroll County Transit director. Kruse was hired to fill the position left open by the departure of Jim Mascal. JoLyn is excited to be joining Carroll County Transit and sharing her transportation experience and knowledge.

Kruse was born in Lanark and always considered it her home, no matter where she lived. Moving away from the community when she was six, she was raised in Kewanee and graduated from Neponset High School. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in music education from Western Illinois University and taught K-12 vocal music for 18 years, including eight years in Pearl City. In 2004, she married her former high school sweetheart, Brian Kruse, and moved back to Lanark.

For the past eight years, Kruse has worked as a manager and dispatcher at Ellinor Farms Pro-Stock Trucking. When she heard from her former minister Elizabeth Mascal that her husband (Jim Mascal) was leaving Carroll County Transit, Kruse decided to apply for the position. Her first day was Monday, May 4.

Some of her interests include: crocheting, bicycling, singing—especially out in public, and traveling. Kruse described her new job as, "something new, something equally challenging" from what she had been doing. Kruse has been learning all that the position entails, including dealing with the county, the state and federal government, as well as grant writing. She is looking forward to a good partnership with the staff and drivers at Carroll County Transit.

Mike Hutchinson accepted the position of executive director for We Care, Inc. of Morton after Jim Thompson retired in June 2014. Mike grew up in Morton Illinois and attended Morton High School before moving to Colorado where he lived for 15 years. Mike moved back to Morton, Illinois in 1988 to help with the family business. After the retirement of his parents and sale of the business, Mike went to work for We Care, Inc. as a bus driver. Three years later he became the finance manager for the company. Mike has been with We Care for over 20 years and executive director for the past year and a half. When not at work, Mike likes landscaping and gardening around the house and being with his family. He has one son in Illinois, one daughter in Colorado, three grandchildren, two in Illinois and one in Colorado. Mike visits Colorado a couple times a year and is a rabid Denver Bronco fan.
Zoe Keller is a transportation planner with the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC), and took the position of Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) coordinator for Region 8 in July. Before this role, Zoe’s work focused on hazard mitigation, emergency preparedness, Safe Routes to School, as well as rural transit.

Zoe is a graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a degree in Urban and Regional Planning, focusing on sustainable development. When Zoe is not working, she enjoys time with her two-year-old son, Avery: reading, playing outdoors, dancing, making a mess with art projects, and anything else that sparks his interest. Zoe also enjoys cooking, exploring cities, and watching the Bulls/Blackhawks/Packers (sorry Chicago – 2/3!).

Paul LaLonde was recently appointed the interim associate director of the Voluntary Action Center in Sycamore, after spending the past five and a half years as the program director of Kendall Area Transit (KAT) in Yorkville. He has accepted the challenge of helping lead VAC as the agency transitions after the sudden loss of Tom Zucker, VAC’s longtime executive director and one of Paul’s biggest mentors in the transit world.

Paul graduated from Northern Illinois University in 2006 earning a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in history and a minor in political science and in 2009 earning a Master of Public Administration degree with a specialization in public management and leadership.

Earlier this year, Paul and his lovely wife, Christin, welcomed their first born child into the world, their son Ewan. In his spare time, Paul enjoys reading, sports, traveling, and playing peekaboo, something he never thought he’d write. He is also a big fan of the St. Louis Cardinals and NIU Huskies football team.
1. How did you get started in rural transportation?

I started at Shawnee Mass Transit District in April of 2008, recruited by a board member who thought I would be helpful writing grants. I had just retired four months earlier from being an elementary school principal and had been very successful at grant writing. I told the board member that I'd help out part time. Well, that was seven years ago and before I knew it, I became the executive director.

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

I learned the ropes by making friends with anyone in transit and asking lots of questions. (Sending cookies to people helped also.) Then, I was lucky enough to end up with an amazing team. Each one is an expert in their field and as a bonus we all get along like one big happy family. I still make friends with transit people and ask lots of questions.

3. Did you have a mentor in transit?

I have many mentors. Two important ones are Sheila Niederhofer from South Central Transit and Bill Jung from Rides. They always take time to answer my questions and offer their advice. I also have to mention that Dave Spacek and his staff have always encouraged me in my endeavors.

4. Toughest day-to-day operational problem

Finding time to get everything done. There are so many unknowns that come my way that is it sometimes hard to plan my day. It's sort of like an emergency room!

5. What's a typical day like

It starts with meeting with my administrative staff. We try to prioritize what's going on and decide who is dealing with what. I field calls from both happy and unhappy riders, meet with drivers, answer emails, review data, and work on anything due to IDOT, etc..

6. What's your proudest achievement?

It is our new facility in Vienna, Illinois. We have a beautiful 6,000 square foot office building and a state of the art 10,000 square foot garage. We all feel very lucky to have such a wonderful facility.

7. What motivates you?

I am constantly motivated by the passion and enthusiasm my staff demonstrates on a daily basis.

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Kim Adair had previously been employed at the North Dakota Department of Transportation for four years where she held the position of public transit section manager. Prior to that position Adair was employed by the Paducah Transit Authority for thirteen years, first as assistant general manager followed by general manager and during this time Paducah Transit Authority was awarded the 2010 Rural System of the Year by the Community Transportation Association of America.

Kim Adair obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from American InterContinental University with a major in Business Management. Kim lives in Louisville with her husband Barry and son Brodie. The couple also has three grown children that live in North Dakota and Kentucky.

C.E.F.S. chief executive officer Paul White stated, “Kim Adair was an excellent choice for the CIPT director position due to her public transportation work experience, leadership, management and supervision of various operations.” CEO White continued, “Adair will be a great asset to lead Central Illinois Public Transit and oversee the program operations.”

The goal of the Central Illinois Public Transit Program is to provide reliable and timely transportation to residents of each county served by ensuring punctuality, accessibility, courtesy, cleanliness, serviceability and safety at all times to riders. Central Illinois Public Transit operates in Clay, Christian, Effingham, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie and Shelby counties. Ridership is open to the general public, meaning anyone of any age and income is welcome to utilize public transportation services. Shelby County is the grant recipient and Central Illinois Public Transit is the administrator and service provider for Clay, Christian, Fayette, Montgomery, Moultrie and Shelby Counties. Effingham County is the grant recipient and Central Illinois Public Transit is the administrator for Effingham County Public Transportation with Central Illinois Public Transit and Rides Mass Transit District as service providers in Effingham County.

The Illinois Department of Transportation provides operating assistance for public transportation in non-urbanized areas. Additional financial support for the program comes from the Illinois Department of Human Services, through Area Agencies on Aging and from local funds, contracts, rider fares and donations.

For more information about the Central Illinois Public Transit Program, please contact the dispatch office at 1-855-755-2478 or visit the agency website at www.cefseoc.org.
TIMELINE:

January 30, 2001: Shawnee Mass Transit District is created by county resolution (Alexander, Johnson, Massac, Pulaski and Union). The district assumes control of Shawnee Development Council’s equipment and resources.

2003: Transit operations commence. Administrative Offices are located at the Fire Station in Ullin, IL. Satellite Depots established in Anna and Metropolis, IL.

May 21, 2003: Shawnee MTD began doing business as SMART (Southern Most Area Rural Transit)

2005: Offices relocated to Shawnee Community College Rustic Campus and Karnak Maintenance Facility

2009: Shawnee MTD relocates its administrative offices to 1001 West Vine Street, Vienna, IL (Old Chevrolet Dealership)

Grant Application submitted for Vienna Administrative Office and Vehicle Maintenance Facility. Johnson County 2000 donates 4.242 acres in the Johnson County Industrial-Technology Park for construction of Administrative Facility. Additionally, Johnson County donates materials and labor for the addition of two entrances to the property and $25,000 to assist in the development of the project site. The City of Vienna commits to waive costs associated with site hookups for sewer, water and gas.

2013: “SMART” is phased out and the District begins doing business as Shawnee MTD.

April 15 2014: Groundbreaking for Shawnee MTD Administrative offices and Vehicle Maintenance Facility.

March 23, 2015: City of Metropolis conveys 3.5 acres in its industrial park to Shawnee MTD by Intergovernmental Agreement.

July 6, 2015: Substantial Completion of Administrative offices and Maintenance Facility.

July 7, 2015: Shawnee MTD occupies and commences operations from its new Facility.

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Regional Maintenance Center Fiscal Year 2015 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 815.961.2241 (Rockford) or 217.522.6087 (Springfield).
8. What do you do to motivate your staff?

We are very motivated by each other. It doesn’t take much to get us excited about something concerning transit. We all make it a point to get out occasionally and ride a route so we can talk with drivers and clients. That definitely motivates us.

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

One thing that has occurred since I have been in transit is coordinating with other transit districts. This is something us rural southern Illinois transit providers have been trying to do whenever we can because it helps us move more people. We have been meeting with South Central Transit, RIDES Mass Transit, and Jackson County Mass Transit to coordinate routes and transfer points for riders traveling across districts. We are currently working on possibly creating a universal pass for the riders in these districts. Riders can go farther at an affordable rate simply by transferring buses. Of course educating the public is a biggie!

10. How has your system grown, and why?

Shawnee Mass Transit District has more than doubled in size since 2008. We have gone from 30 employees to 70 employees. We offer service in all areas of our district with daily shuttles in all of our main towns. Ridership has increased from 2,500 per month up to 15,000 per month. Our growth is definitely due to the passion and dedication which our employees exhibit every day. I love my job because of them.

Maureen with family members at ribbon cutting celebration: son, Isaac; Maureen; grandson, Zach; daughter, Julie; and husband, Jay

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passengers, active shooter and other weapons, vehicle evacuation, and inclement weather. As with the panels, I welcome reader input regarding these two sessions.

I especially urge grantees which have begun service in recent years, or who are soon to begin service, to call or email me. I know how daunting it is to be the newcomer and how intimidating it feels to be in the room with seasoned rural transit professionals who seemingly already know everything. This is your chance to anonymously get your questions answered. I look forward to hearing from you.

The 2016 conference will be held April 6th (full day) and 7th (morning) in Springfield at the Northfield Center.
OTHER FACTS:
Original Board (2001): Nancy Doss, Bill Jackson, Ty Peterson, Kathy Rushing, Rex Wilburn


Fun Fact: Board Meetings were originally held at Our Place Restaurant in Karnak, IL.