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Upcoming Events:

September 9-11, 2015
IPTA Fall Conference, Normal

October 14, 2015
Springfield Regional Maintenance Workshop

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

The Critical Infrastructure and Transportation Security Committee (formerly the Transportation Committee) of the Illinois Terrorism Task Force has existed since 2002. Meetings are held at the State Emergency Operations Center next to the Hanley Building in Springfield. I’ve been the rural transit representative for the Illinois Public Transportation Association since the beginning, and the two downstate urban representatives are Josh Moore of Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (CityLink) and David White of Connect Transit (Bloomington-Normal).

Josh, David, and I recently met with Tom Korty, Administrator for Homeland Security/Emergency Management, IDOT Infrastructure Security Office. In recent years Tom has facilitated most of our committee’s meetings. Tom suggested a security training session for rural transit managers, which we plan to hold at the 2016 RTAC conference. Josh and David have extensive backgrounds in this area and likely will co-present the training. Part of the session will include a security scenario with audience participation.

As you are aware, IDOT DPIT requires all Illinois rural transit grantees to submit a hazard and security plan. In addition, the last transportation bill MAP-21 imposed new requirements that all operators of public transit service develop a formal safety plan, though no guidance has been issued on the development or content of those plans. We had a session on that at the 2014 RTAC conference.

But having a plan on the shelf that is compliant with funding regulations doesn’t necessarily equate to your transit system being ready to respond to security issues. Your readiness is dependent upon all of your system employees knowing and following your safety/security plan. Otherwise, you could be setting yourself up for injuries or deaths. I’ve got a couple of examples.

On December 15, 2012, the day after the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting in Newtown, Connecticut, I received a phone call from a rural transit system director. One of the drivers had asked the director, “What would we do in an active shooter situation?” The director called to me to ask if I could find some information on the subject. I immediately replied, “Do you have the safety/security plan which IDOT required you to put together?” The director had the plan but stated it was seldom, if ever, looked at. I requested a copy of the plan. I read through it and found a detailed policy addressing active shooter situations. The problem: no one at the system was aware of the policy and employee roles in executing it.

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IPTA Notes

On May 31, the Illinois General Assembly adjourned and went home for what typically would have been their summer break. But unfortunately, their work is far from done. The fiscal year 2016 budget that was passed with only Democrat votes in both the House and the Senate was at least $3 billion out of balance, and Governor Rauner has said if it reaches his desk, he will veto it. Governor Rauner has indicated that he will not negotiate on potential new revenue for FY16 until his “Turnaround Agenda” is passed. Rauner’s “Turnaround Agenda” tackles controversial issues such as workers’ compensation, prevailing wage, property tax freeze and more.

While we have heard that the legislative leaders and the Governor are “talking,” there has been no indication of real progress toward an agreement on these issues or the budget. IPTA’s lobbyists and I have been working diligently all spring to educate General Assembly members and the Governor’s staff of the importance of maintaining the current subsidy for transit statewide. We will continue to work with legislators and their staff to try to minimize cuts to public transportation funding.

Although there has been no budget deal reached, the General Assembly did not leave town without confirming appointees to the top two posts at the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The Senate Executive Appointments Committee confirmed the appointments of Randy Blankenhorn as secretary and former State Representative Rich Brauer as assistant secretary. Secretary Blankenhorn had been head of the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) since 2006 before his appointment in February. Prior to that, he was an employee of IDOT for 20 years. Brauer, a Republican from Petersburg, served in the House for 12 years. We are very excited to work with Secretary Blankenhorn and his team, as he has a history of being very supportive and understanding of the needs of transit.

Much like the state, the federal government has also failed to make much progress in passing funding for transportation programs. Congress passed a short-term, 2-month extension of the transportation authorization at the end of May. But we are hopeful that they will spend their summer trying to come to an agreement on increased revenue for transportation, and a long-term reauthorization bill. I urge you to contact your Congressman and Senators Durbin’s and Kirk’s offices and encourage them to work toward a swift solution for long-term funding for transportation. It is important to convey how vital a robust public transportation system is to communities across Illinois, as well as the economy across the country.

IPTA’s 2015 Fall Conference plans are well underway. You will not want to miss this year’s conference, as we have an agenda packed full of very informative sessions and fun activities for all. The conference will be held September 9-11 at the Marriott in Normal. The theme for the conference is Public Transportation: New Challenges, New Opportunities. We will have sessions covering topics such as Building Choice Ridership, Workforce Development and Training, Revenue Generation, Leadership Development, Building Community Support for Change, and Succession Planning. We will kick off the conference with our annual golf outing at The Den at Fox Creek in Bloomington, and will have a welcome dinner at the historic Ewing Manor. And on Thursday evening, Southern Bus and Mobility is bringing back the ever popular Tailgate Party. I hope to see everyone there! Be on the lookout for registration materials in your inbox in early July.

Laura Calderon
Thirteenth Annual Illinois Paratransit Roadeo

On Saturday, April 25, 2015, the Rural Transit Assistance Center hosted the Thirteenth Annual Illinois Paratransit Roadeo at the Sangamon Fairgrounds in New Berlin, Illinois.

We congratulate each participant on their individual performance.

Of the 28 contestants and 10 transportation agencies represented, 12 (denoted by *) were first time participants:

**Access Springfield:** Frank Harris, *Francis Nwajei
**Central Illinois Public Transportation:** Nick Briggs, Tari Howard, Angie Pride
**Futures Unlimited:** Dan Faust, Delbert French, Bill Gates, Nancy Lefler, Robin Meckley
**McDonough County Public Transit:** Timothy (Pat) White, Kyle Waller
**Piatt County Public Transportation:** *Tim Gadbury
**Pretzel City Area Transit:** *Priscilla A Garner
**Rides Mass Transit District:** Jill Lyons
**South Central Mass Transit District:** *Misty Bowlby, *Evrett Fox, Jamie Maltman, Drew Sanders, *Beth Weltering
**Voluntary Action Center, Sycamore:** *Kay Anderson, *Todd McLaughlin, *John Stout
**West Central Mass Transit District:** *Christine Chapman, Roy E. Knouse, Jr., *Kody Petrie, Tim Powell, *William Ranson

Overall (scores from all categories combined) Winners:
**First Place:** Todd McLaughlin
**Second Place:** John Stout
**Third Place:** William Ranson
**Novice Award:** Todd McLaughlin

The Thirteenth Annual Illinois Paratransit Roadeo Participants

— Roadeo continued on page 9
The Spotlight is on Paul LaLonde, assistant director, Voluntary Action Center (VAC), Operator of Kendall Area Transit

1. How did you get started in rural transportation?

I interned with the DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study (DSATS) MPO at the City of DeKalb while attending NIU. At DSATS I worked very closely with the Voluntary Action Center, the community and public transportation provider for both the urban and rural portions of DeKalb County. After graduation, Tom Zucker, executive director at VAC, approached me about becoming director of their expansion project in Kendall County—Kendall Area Transit (KAT). It’s a rare opportunity to join a project from the very beginning, and being able to continue working with (or in this case for) VAC was something I couldn’t pass up.

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

I initially learned the planning and administration portion of rural (and urban) transportation at DSATS. When I joined VAC in Kendall, I didn’t have a lot of experience on the operations side. However, I leaned heavily on VAC’s staff for guidance. Really the best way to learn is to dive right in, which is exactly what happened!

3. Did you have a mentor in transit?

As far as rural community and public transit administration and operation are concerned, I would say Tom Zucker has been my mentor. Tapping into his nearly 25 years of community and public transportation experience has been invaluable. Brian Dickson, MPO Coordinator, was my mentor at DSATS. The planning experience I gained from him has also been invaluable—learning about how to anticipate and react to future trends and community needs has served me well as the KAT program has grown.

4. Toughest day-to-day operational problem?

Construction and topography! I know it’s tough on most transit systems, but every major artillery in Kendall County has been under continuous construction (or so it seems!) for over two years with no end in sight. A lot of this has to do with the tremendous growth the County experienced from 2000-2010. Population swelled from 54,000 to 115,000 in that time frame—a growth rate of 114 percent. Not to mention the Fox River cuts the County in half. Minimal bridges make traversing the area very challenging. However, I have to give a lot of credit to our schedulers, dispatchers, and drivers, who have managed to consistently maintain an on-time rate of over 92 percent despite all the outside mayhem!

5. What’s a typical day like?

I don’t mean to be cliché, but there isn’t really a typical day. Some days are filled with meeting after meeting after meeting. Other days are spent putting out fires. And other days are spent in front of the computer filling out reports, grants, and correspondences until the eyes bleed. Everyday tends to have different challenges and needs.
Maintenance Safety Training Part Seven
By Springfield Mass Transit District (SMTD)

This is the seventh and last installment of the 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.

Maintenance Safety Training Part Seven covers tire safety and is written by technicians Spencer Sidwell and Shane Clayton.

At SMTD approximately 90 percent of our technicians are certified by the Tire Industry Association (TIA). Spenser is a certified trainer with the TIA. We take tire safety very seriously and therefore saved the section on tires for last, in the hope that it really sticks in your mind. Out of everything we’ve talked about, tires have probably caused more injuries and death than anything else.

The link below is to a video about something called zipper rupture. The video will explain what zipper rupture is and what causes it. Listen very carefully to the sound that it makes.

Zipper rupture video: http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=294Wu6O0uW0

Remember that sound! Knowing the sound of zipper rupture could save your life. We have all done it—add air to a low tire and keep driving. But if a tire is more than 20 percent below its normal operating pressure, it should be removed from the vehicle and taken off of the rim to be checked for damage. If there is not any damage, then the tire can be remounted, placed in a safety cage and aired up. Other than minimal pressure needed to seat the bead, a tire should never be inflated outside of a safety cage.

The illustration below shows the effects of proper inflation versus over or under inflation. An improperly inflated tire not only causes premature tire wear, but causes the vehicle to handle poorly which greatly increases the chance that the driver could lose control.
Dry rotted or weather checked sidewalls as in the top left picture are very dangerous. The sidewalls of the tire are rotted and weakened. The top right picture shows a tire that has been curbed. Curbing a tire happens when the tire is rubbed against a concrete curb. This actually grinds away the rubber from the sidewall causing it to become weak. Both of these conditions mean that the tire is at high risk of having a blowout, especially at highway speeds.

If you do have a flat, it’s critical that it be repaired correctly. Unfortunately, it seems to be the nature of today’s society to want to sue someone every time something goes wrong. This is just our opinion, but if we were in charge of a government vehicle hauling passengers, we would not want anyone but a certified tire technician working on our tires.

The picture to the left shows the repairable area of a tire. A puncture can only be repaired if it is in between the two yellow areas. No other area of the tire may be repaired. That is not only the recommendation of the TIA, but in the state of Illinois it is the law.

The top left picture shows a repair kit for patching a tire. The top right picture shows the wrong way to fix a tire. Any time a tire is punctured it should be removed from the rim, checked for damage, and then patched from the inside. Plugging a tire from the outside is not only dangerous, but illegal.
6. What’s your proudest achievement?

Professionally: Building relationships throughout the organization and community. I am fully convinced that transit programs like KAT can only succeed through strong community relationships. It starts in the organization—making sure everyone understands their role and getting everyone to pull on the same side of the rope. Next, relationship building needs to extend to the community. Working and partnering with local municipalities, businesses, non-profits, families, riders, state agencies and legislators, and many other partners goes a long way into building a sustainable, successful transit system.

7. What motivates you?

I am a very intrinsically motivated person. I have a strong desire to succeed and overcome challenges. I try taking the Stoic approach that an obstacle or particularly tough challenge is a sign for you to continue on—when you feel resistance, use that as a cue to go forward. Being part of a management team in a non-profit like VAC is extremely challenging, but also very rewarding. In addition, I have always felt a connection to seniors. Giving back to older generations is a high priority for me.

8. What do you do to motivate your staff?

I try to get to know each person individually because everyone is motivated by different means. I believe at the end of the day, however, most people just want to be treated fairly and respectfully. In this line of work, most people want to help their fellow neighbors, so I try to give recognition when it’s due—show my staff that they are valued and their work matters and makes a difference in the community.

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

I have been working in the community/public transportation field for almost eight years, which isn't long in retrospect. So, not a lot of major changes have occurred that I can talk about. Maybe, the shift in “wheelchair” mindset to a “mobility-device” mindset. Mobility devices are getting bigger and more complex. To cope, ADA vehicle lifts are beginning to be adapted to handle the increase in weight and size of these deceives.

10. How has your system grown, and why?

The KAT system just celebrated its five year anniversary this past March, and the system has grown exponentially—625 percent increase over that time! This incredible growth has many reasons, but I see three major ones. First, there is a huge need for community and public transportation services in Kendall County. Second, the community has been extremely supportive of the program. Our many community partners support our mission and have been generous with their assistance. Third, but no less important, is the VAC staff. They are dedicated to the mission of providing high quality transportation services to members of the community. Their commitment and enthusiasm have given KAT a reputation as a quality reliable community system.

Paul with his wife, Christin, and son, Ewan
Category Winners:
Driving: William Ranson
Pre-Trip Inspection: John Stout
Wheelchair Securement: Jill Lyons
Written Test: Kay Anderson

If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody. Chinese Proverb

Many thanks to our happy volunteers:
Friday set-up: Keith Shaw, Linda Shaw, Edward Heflin, Carol Montague, and Jacqueline Waters
Roadeo marshall: Edward Heflin
Saturday set-up and event judges: Randy Barrow, Bob Bugger, Nancy Bugger, Vicki Clift, Erin Fischer, Ian Fischer, Chris Garner, Brad Gibbs, Bill Gulke, JD Hodges, Sara Hodges, Bill Jung, Mable Kreps, Adam Lach, Mark Liening, Carol Montague, Val Nickerson, Bob Patterson, Nelson Pruitt, Keith Shaw, Linda Shaw, Eileen Sierra-Brown, Jeff Stark, Jacqueline Waters, Bert Weber, Alicia Westbrook, Renae White
Score keepers extraordinaire: Carol Montague and Mable Kreps
Award presenter: Edward Heflin
Sponsors: Tom Boldwin, Midwest Transit (prize money) and IDOT-DPIT (trip for first place overall winner to participate in the CTAA National Roadeo)

The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) National Roadeo
On Saturday and Sunday, May 30-31, Todd McLaughlin, our first place winner, represented Illinois at the CTAA National Roadeo in Tampa, Florida. Todd placed 22nd out of 65 contenders. Well done, Todd!
— Roadeo continued from page 9

Driving Course
This is where participants test their driving skills while maneuvering through ten driving exercises.

Delbert French

Delbert is seen here beginning his Roadeo Pretrip exercise.

If there was an award for perseverance, Delbert would be the hands down winner.

Delbert has participated in every Roadeo except the third annual Roadeo due to having surgery.

We tip our hat to you Delbert, and look forward to seeing you next year.
The tread depth of each tire should be checked during each service as well. Minimum allowable tread depth in Illinois is 2/32 on the rear and 4/32 on the front.

Anytime a wheel is removed for whatever reason, the lug nuts should be torqued to the proper specs. There are different methods to properly torque a lug nut depending on what style of wheel and lug nut you have. The majority of the para-transit vehicles that come into our shop have hub-piloted wheels. The proper method of torquing these is to put a drop of oil on the stud and a drop of oil on the center of the nut and then torque the nuts to the proper spec.

At our shop, we then test drive the vehicle, come back and re-torque the nuts, and then install wheel checks. Wheel checks are a plastic arrow that pushes over the outside of the lug nut. The arrow points at the next lug nut. The arrows then form a circular pattern. This makes it easy for anyone to look and see if a lug has moved. Our drivers are required to examine the wheel checks as part of their pre-trip inspection. In addition, our service lane technicians check them again when the bus comes back to the garage. We hope this effort will prevent any wheel-off situations.

Some of these videos are somewhat graphic, but we feel they need to be seen to prove our point.

The first video is of a guy who thumps a tire. If you look closely at the tire, you’ll see what looks like a bulge on it.

Tire blows up when thumped video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enRKvjKr7l0

Watch again and pay attention to the guy. You see how the force from the exploding tire throws him back and rips his shirt off of him. If you look closely, you’ll also notice that his arm is broken and that there is lots of blood. That just goes to show how fast something can happen and how much force is released when a tire is ruptured.

The next video is another example of a wheel-off incident. The one we saw earlier showed a tire and wheel coming off and hitting a car. This one is a bit more graphic.

Guy in gas station hit by loose tire video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xvwOh-tlyJU

I think this clearly shows the need for properly torquing lug nuts and using wheel checks.

This next video shows the importance of proper training and proper equipment.

Tire explosion (person dies) video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gkiz1uWCF0Y

—SMTD continued on page 12
A few weeks ago, a different rural transit system experienced an irate customer pulling a box cutter on a bus driver mid-route. The driver made some instinctual decisions which resolved the situation, but according to a system official it could have been handled better. Within days, that system had another incident in which an intoxicated customer carried a cooler onto the vehicle, popped the top on a cold beer, lit a cigarette, and invited the driver to have a beer with him. Again, instinctual decisions were made and system officials told me the situation could have been handled in a better fashion. The point: the time to become familiar with policies and procedures is before the incident occurs, not during the incident.

At Sandy Hook, students and staff had participated in a lockdown drill weeks earlier. More lives would have been lost had people not known where to seek shelter. A first-grade teacher and 14 students were saved because during the drill a piece of black construction paper had been taped over a small window on the classroom door and the teacher forgot to remove the tape. Several weeks later, when the shooter walked by that classroom with the door shut and tape over the window, he must have believed no one was inside, and walked on by. Otherwise, the death toll would have been even higher.

If your system has had any incidents which you feel are appropriate for discussion at the session, or any possible incidents which you dread thinking about, please contact me. No names will be divulged during the session, just generic details. We might use the box cutter scenario since a system official graciously agreeing to provide further details regarding the incident and its aftermath. But we are glad to discuss any and all other security concerns you would like addressed.

Two additional videos:
- Tire Heat Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HILej38bLOk
- Wheel Off Promo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O-e9Al3cGMA

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All About That Bus
Clever “All About That Bass” Meghan Trainor Parody

Take a minute—or precisely 3:14 and enjoy the “All About That Bus” YouTube video at:
https://youtu.be/pBxIQC9BKsu

On October 23, 2014, the Akron Metro Regional Transit Authority posted a new video to YouTube because they’re “all about that bus, ‘bout that bus, no driving”.

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