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Upcoming Events:

April 27-28, 2011
   RTAC Spring Conference, Springfield
April 30, 2011
   RTAC Roadeo, New Berlin
June 5-11, 2011
   CTAA Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana
On-Going:
   On-Site Driver Training and Classroom Driver Training
   (Call RTAC: 800.526.9943)

RTAC is a unit of the
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Western Illinois University
RTAC Notes

Fulton, Macoupin, and Pike are the latest counties to achieve a Section 5311 grant. They are located in west central Illinois, a region which once had the most rural counties in the state without public transportation. Hopefully, within a few months, those counties will be joined by multicounty grants from Cass/ Schuyler and Logan/Mason/Menard. In FY11 the region will also see a Calhoun/Greene/ Jersey Section 5311 grant. The funding map on page 4 illustrates how the face of Illinois rural transit has changed in the past several years.

With more grants we'll have more people at our spring conference, resulting in a change to our room configuration at the Northfield Center. To increase audience visibility of presentations, we're moving the presentation area from the west to the south wall and adding another screen. Due to scheduling difficulties the 2011 conference will be held in the last week of April, several weeks later than normal.

A few days later the Roadeo moves to its new location at the Sangamon County Fairgrounds, located just west of Springfield at New Berlin, which is south of I-72. This allows those loyal folks who graciously volunteer at this event to make one extended trip to the Springfield area versus two trips within weeks of each other. The success of the Roadeo lies squarely on the shoulders of the volunteers who, under the direction of our own Jacqueline Waters, have turned the event into an annual reunion of fun and good will.

A little over a month later the Community Transportation Association of America is holding a special event, its 25th EXPO, just to the east of us in Indianapolis, Indiana. Our friend Roland Mross, who is currently the United We Ride ambassador for this region, told me that the first EXPO was held in Indianapolis. I later found out that Roland played a huge role in getting the first EXPO off the ground, which makes this a homecoming for him as well as a living tribute to his distinguished career. Due to budget considerations our RTAC staff only attends the EXPO when it is close to home. In 2011 we all plan to attend the 25th celebration and we encourage all of you to take advantage of the best forum in the rural transit arena for learning and networking.
Mobility Management

There has been a movement over the past several years in public transportation to increase individual mobility by using a more strategic approach to service coordination. The Transit Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) conducted a series of studies that set out to identify what services consumers of local transportation would want in the future. They acknowledged a need for transit operators to coordinate mobility and address individualized consumer transportation needs. The shift in overarching focus from an agency’s vehicles, facilities and personnel to individual customer needs, moving people instead of vehicles, and a focus on the quality of the travel experience has become widely known as mobility management. This cannot be done without broad coordination with and engagement of a variety of interested agencies in any particular local area or region, including but not limited to representatives of workforce development, health and human services, education, housing and transportation.

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA) incorporated this concept into its TransitVision 2050, recognizing that to better serve the needs of individual travelers and to more efficiently meet national and regional goals, the public transportation industry needed to adopt the mobility management concept. APTA has been working collaboratively with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to advance mobility management programs. There are many components of an effective mobility management program, including a passenger-driven approach to transportation planning, the development of one-stop travel information and trip-planning systems, and multiagency coordination of local transportation strategies.

TCRP has indicated that transportation agencies nationwide are involved in a wide range of mobility management functions. And although examples of mobility management can be seen all over the country, very few agencies have embraced the concept as an essential element of their mission. APTA has touted three successful mobility management programs in urbanized areas across the country: Denver, Colorado; Detroit, Michigan; and Portland, Oregon. But here in Illinois, new ground is being broken with the development and institution of a comprehensive mobility management plan in rural areas, where it is arguably needed the most.

Illinois is six months into the Mobility Yes! Transit Riders Information Project (MY TRIP), which has been funded by a United We Ride Mobility Management Grant. Illinois was one of only six states to receive an award under this program. MY TRIP is a pilot project being directed by the Rural Transit Assistance Center in select rural Illinois counties, through which a team of a Mobility Coordinator, Mobility Managers and Mobility Coaches are working to develop a toolkit and training program that can be replicated across the country. Goals of the program include a focus on the movement of people instead of vehicles meeting individual customer needs; improvements to effectiveness, efficiency and quality of service; and supporting travel planning for a passenger’s entire trip.

The counties involved in the MY TRIP program are Clark, De Witt, Mercer, Rock Island, and Whiteside—all counties that have completed the ICCT Clearinghouse Transportation Coordination Primer, laying the groundwork for continued and more focused mobility collaboration. The progress being made in these counties is truly innovative and is sure to be a model to be replicated in urban and rural areas alike.

A focus on mobility management promises greater efficiency, an increase of service effectiveness and improved customer satisfaction. It is critical that the shift in focus to the needs of the passenger continue. Transportation providers across the country should be encouraged to move toward fully embracing this vision and incorporating it into their strategic plans.

Laura Calderon
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 Danville, 217.431.0653; Rockford, 815.961.2241; Springfield, 217.522.6087.

### Regional Maintenance Center Fiscal Year 2010 Statistics

#### Agencies Served and Vehicle Repairs

- **Danville**
  - Air Conditioning: 0
  - Brakes: 0
  - Electrical: 0
  - Mechanical: 0
  - Wheelchair Lifts: 0

- **Rockford**
  - Air Conditioning: 4
  - Brakes: 3
  - Electrical: 9
  - Mechanical: 3
  - Wheelchair Lifts: 1

- **Springfield**
  - Air Conditioning: 54
  - Brakes: 22
  - Electrical: 39
  - Mechanical: 58
  - Wheelchair Lifts: 27

#### Top Five Repairs at the RMC’s

- **Danville**
- **Rockford**
- **Springfield**
Kendall Area Transit (KAT) is the brand new community-wide paratransit system for Kendall County, Illinois. Daily operations are administered by the Voluntary Action Center (VAC), a transportation non-profit that has been providing transit services in DeKalb County for more than 35 years.

Kendall County is a vibrant community with a complex character. It is part of the “Ring Around the Collar,” a group of counties that border the “Collar Counties” of Cook. These Ring counties have characteristics of both suburbia and rural America. Like other “Ring” counties, Kendall has experienced fast urbanization in certain areas while retaining an overall rural character. In a 2010 CNN.com article, Kendall County was named the fastest growing county in the entire country. In 2000, Kendall County had a population of 54,544. In 2009 Kendall’s population had grown to 104,821. That’s an increase of almost 100 percent in nine short years.

Rapid growth has brought with it new challenges to County residents. Of most concern was the lack of adequate community transit services. Before KAT started service, Kendall was one of the state’s largest counties – population-wise – without a public transit system. Many throughout the county – including county board members, county and municipal administrations, community advocates, and county social service agencies – worked to change that. To make a long story short, operations began on March 22, 2010. The first ride was given to a Mr. Dobson, who was ecstatic he was able to schedule a trip to the doctor.

While the Kendall community planned the structure of KAT, they knew they needed system operations to be handled by a professional and seasoned transit outfit. VAC seemed the perfect fit. Incorporated as a non-profit in 1974, VAC has been giving rides to transit-dependent residents of DeKalb County for over 35 years.
VAC also knows the challenges that face Ring Around the Collar counties since DeKalb County is part of the “Ring”. As such, VAC knows what it takes to build and maintain a community centered paratransit system in an environment like Kendall County.

VAC and Kendall County agreed that to build a sustainable and effective system, operations had to be centered in Kendall County. So, Kendall County donated some office space to VAC for an operation center. This arrangement would not only provide visibility for KAT, but also allow a more efficient and economical system to grow. KAT operates from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday, and its customers easily remember the 877-IGO-4KAT hotline number. KAT maintains six light duty 12 passenger buses and one medium-duty 22 passenger bus. Currently, staff consists of four drivers, two scheduler / dispatchers, and a program director, who manages the overall system.

As previously stated KAT has only been operational for about seven months, but success has come quickly in Kendall County. Daily ridership has increased by 109 percent since April, and total rides have been increasing by double digit percentages each and every month. In addition, KAT has registered over 600 riders. In recognition of the program’s exceptional contributions on behalf of older adults in Kendall County, KAT was awarded the 2010 Governor’s Award for Unique Achievement. This award was presented in conjunction with the Illinois Department on Aging and the Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging and Governor Pat Quinn on October 6, 2010, in Springfield.

What has contributed to KAT’s rapid success? There are many people, places, and things that have helped add to early success; but overall, three things stick out as especially important.

First and foremost are the Kendall County communities. KAT receives much support from the municipalities and residents. Without their time, commitment, and financial contributions, KAT would not be in its current position able to provide excellent customer service to transit-dependent residents while looking at new opportunities for growth.
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!

Rick Nolan is a Community Planner with the McLean County Regional Planning Commission in Bloomington, Illinois. In addition to doing liaison work with HSTP Region 6, he also assists with other transportation initiatives within the organization. Rick also assists in greenways and trails planning and coordinates the agency’s annual community information forum and other community outreach efforts. He is also involved in assisting with several intergovernmental planning initiatives. He has been with the MCRPC for over seven years.

Before joining the MCRPC, he was with the Economic Development Council of the Bloomington-Normal Area for eight years. He is married and has three children.

Jennifer Sicks is the Land Use/Transportation Planner with the McLean County Regional Planning Commission, having joined the agency in September 2001. Jennifer manages MCRPC’s transportation planning program, and is involved in comprehensive planning at the municipal and regional levels, travel demand modeling and GIS. She chairs the Transportation Advisory Committee, a community-based committee including transit providers, social service agencies and community groups, which develops the Bloomington-Normal urban area Human Services Transportation Plan. Jennifer has been a technical advisor to the Region 6 HSTP Policy Committee since its inception, and since January 2009 has acted as a regional coordinator for Region 6.

In 2001 Jennifer received a Master of Urban Planning degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She holds a B.A. in political science from Mount Holyoke College. Prior to returning to her native Illinois in 1999, she resided in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.
Meet the New Members of the Rural Transit Assistance Program Advisory Council

R. Jean Jumper has been the Managing Director of the West Central Mass Transit District since 2006. When Ms. Jumper started, WCMTD had five employees and two vehicles with a budget of approximately $500,000. Since 2006, with the help of staff at IDOT and the WCMTD Board of Directors and staff, the organization has grown to a staff of 36 people and 23 vehicles. The WCMTD budget is approximately $1.5 million.

The Transit District provides demand response public service to citizens of Morgan, Scott and Brown counties in West Central Illinois and has added Pike County to the District beginning November 1, 2010.

Ms. Jumper, a native of Nebraska, moved to Illinois in 1985 to start the Jacksonville Area Visitors & Conventions Bureau and served as its Executive Director until 1992.

She went on to serve as President of the Jacksonville Area Chamber of Commerce from 1992 to 1997 and as the President of the Bellville Area Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Council in Belleville, Illinois from 1997 to 2000. In 2000 she returned to Jacksonville to take the top position at the Prairieland United Way where she served until November 2006. During her tenure at United Way the organization raised and distributed more than three million dollars to not-for-profit organizations in Morgan, Scott, Green and Cass Counties.

Ms. Jumper is married to Gordon D. Jumper and together they have six children and seven grandchildren with another due in late winter.

Sheila Niederhofer is the Managing Director of South Central Transit (SCT) and has held this position since July 2006. SCT is the IDOT-designated general public transportation provider in six (6) counties (Marion, Clinton, Jefferson, Washington, Franklin and Perry) in south central Illinois. Under Sheila’s leadership, SCT has experienced record breaking ridership, has obtained new facilities in Franklin and Clinton counties, and has installed four fueling stations to help off-set the high cost of fuel. There has been an expansion of services in each county, which includes the implementation of inter-county work shuttles and coordinating services with other transit agencies and human service organizations. Sheila is the 2nd Vice President for the Illinois Public Transit Association, a member of the Kaskaskia College Foundation, and serves as a member of the RTAP Advisory Board.

Sheila has a bachelor’s degree in business management and has completed the (Certified Community Transportation Manager) CCTM program through Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA).

Sheila lives in Centralia with her husband Leroy; she has two sons, Daniel and Joshua, and two grandchildren, Rayne and Lorren. She is involved with the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the American Cancer Society. In her spare time she loves to read and garden.
Kendall Area Transit Wins 2010 Governor’s Award for Unique Achievement

The Kendall Area Transit (KAT) program was awarded the 2010 Governor's Award for Unique Achievement. This award is presented in conjunction with the Illinois Department on Aging and the Northeastern Illinois Area Agency on Aging and Governor Pat Quinn in recognition of the program’s exceptional contributions on behalf of older adults in Kendall County.

KAT officially kicked-off service as the first ever county-wide community transit provider for Kendall County on March 22, 2010. However, qualifying for the Governor’s Award was the result of more than ten years of work in the making. Particularly instrumental in the process were Kendall County board member Jessie Haffenrichter; Kendall County Administrator Jeff Wilkins; Bette Schoenholtz, Executive Director of Senior Services Associates; Goldie Tarr, Kendall County resident and advocate; Tom Zucker, Executive Director of the Voluntary Action Center; and Paul LaLonde, KAT Program Director.

KAT provides public transportation to all Kendall County residents, but is particularly vital to seniors and persons with disabilities. KAT is administered through the County of Kendall with daily operations provided by the Voluntary Action Center. KAT has posted monthly double digit percentage increases in ridership since its inception and has quickly become known as a reliable transportation provider. Seniors and other Kendall County residents are happy to call 1-877-IGO-4KAT when they need a ride in Kendall County.

Press release courtesy of Paul LaLonde, Program Director, Kendall Area Transit.

Go West: Security Award

MACOMB, IL – Go West, Western Illinois University’s transit system, has been named the inaugural recipient of the Gold Award for Bus Security Program Excellence from the American Public Transportation Association (APTA).

Go West was the only system in the nation in the under four-million ridership category to receive the Gold Award, according to Go West Director Jude Kiah.

“The category that our system is part of embodies a lot of places that are much larger than Go West. APTA’s director even noted that they were surprised that such a small entity would have such a developed security
program." Kiah added. "We are so pleased to have been recognized for this program. The bus safety and security awards are to transportation to what the Academy Awards are to entertainment."

Kiah explained that Go West Security was established in 2006 as a result of increased ridership on the weekend late night routes (Routes 4 and 13) and the resulting increase in violence and vandalism on Route 4. After a meeting between university and city officials, it was determined that a security program would be put into place to deter criminal behavior.

"The idea quickly blossomed to include the employment of selected students from Western's School of Law Enforcement and Justice Administration. We partnered with local and campus police departments, as well as the county's 9-1-1 center to establish response and emergency protocols and to assist in training the students who were serving as security officers on the routes," he added.

In 2006, when the program was initiated, Go West was experiencing approximately $10,000 in vandalism per year. In 2010, that number has been reduced to $500 per year, while the number of fights on the busses went from 13 to 2007 to two this year, Kiah noted.

"The numbers are impressive, particularly since our ridership has skyrocketed. On Route 4 alone, we went from 2,341 average riders in 2006-07 on the weekends to more than 4,200 in 2009-10," he pointed out. "I think a large part of the increase in ridership is due to the fact that the students feel safer on these routes now. Before, we had complaints from riders that they felt the route was unsafe, and we had trouble getting drivers to bid for that route. Since the advent of the security program, our ridership has gone up and we've had no problems getting drivers to bid for these routes."

While security programs on transit systems aren't unique, what sets Western's apart from other programs is the opportunity for law enforcement students to put their practical classroom experience to work.

"While many larger agencies hire their own police force or off-duty officers, due the limited number of officers available to staff our busses, we looked to the University to provide the best and brightest students who would be able to enhance their leadership skills and enforcement experience, while keeping our routes safe," Kiah said. "Providing safe transport for our riders, while protecting our property and staff, is of utmost importance. Thanks to the students who take their details as security officers seriously, we provide that safe ride home."

For more information about Go West, visit http://www.student_services.wiu.edu/go_west.
Posted By: Darcie Shinberger, University Relations
Photo courtesy of the Western Illinois University Visual Production Center
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Second, KAT has been building strong partnerships with funding organizations, stakeholders, and community residents. As previously mentioned, KAT customers rely on the system, which cannot function without a strong network. The stakeholders – including customers, governments, businesses, social service agencies, medical facilities, and retirement centers – are all vested in the success of KAT. To continue succeeding, KAT plans on maintaining and expanding networked partnerships.

Finally, and most importantly, is the staff. Without the staff, the rubber would literally not hit the road. The dispatchers and drivers are the ones who put a personality to KAT by coming into contact with the customers. They are responsible for transporting them safely and courteously, and in many instances, friendships are formed. Staff cares about the people they serve, and they care about one another. Through KAT, VAC feels like a team in every sense of the word.

What does the future hold for KAT? As a new transportation program, KAT has many years of excellent accomplishment ahead if it. By continuing to provide safe, reliable, and courteous services, VAC hopes that word of mouth will spread and ridership increases. A lot of work still has to be done. Gaps have to be filled, networks have to be expanded, and opportunities must be met. However, if current successes are any indication, VAC will meet these challenges and the KAT program will be a wonderful addition to the infrastructural fabric of Kendall County for years to come.