News and Information:

RTAC Notes.................................................2
IPTA Notes ..................................................3
Transit Reservation Info Program.................4
Ground Breaking ...........................................5
Spotlight..........................................................6
Transit Movers ..............................................8
Ribbon Cutting ..............................................11
Buses for Sale ..............................................11

Upcoming Events:

RTAC office will be closed
March 7-8, 2012
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Rural Community Economic Development
Conference, Peoria
April 3-5, 2012
RTAC Spring Conference, Springfield
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

Arguably the most confusing aspect of the Section 5311 program is local match and its many facets and angles. Local match can be hard to explain, as well as to understand. Different folks view it different ways based on their role in the overall rural transit spectrum (either as funding body or Section 5311 grantee or Section 5311 operator or agency whose constituents need transit service or ICCT Clearinghouse staff person facilitating a coordination project).

Our 2012 spring conference will feature a lengthy presentation on local match. Between now and then, a group of nine rural transit professionals will conduct planning sessions to formulate a comprehensive presentation. We hope to cover local match from A to Z. Due to our tough fiscal times, the presentation will touch on federal and state funding climates and trends. If you have questions for our planning group or suggestions about what we need to cover in the presentation, please contact me.

Several years ago, during a period in which grantee numbers had remained flat, the RTAP advisory council shortened the spring conference length. Now, because we have so many new grants and personnel, the advisory council has requested that the conference return to the format of starting at noon on Tuesday and ending at noon on Thursday, which provides an extra half day of content. The dates for the upcoming event are April 3-5, 2012.

For those of you who have never participated (either as contestant or volunteer) in our Roadeo, please contact Jacqueline Waters to ask her about that event, which is normally held a week or two after the conference. We found a new site in 2011, the Sangamon County Fairgrounds, which turned out better than we could have imagined. The biggest plus for the new site is an indoor location for the written test, break area, lunch, and awards ceremony. My guess is that some potential participants might be a tad worried that the event could be too competitive or too difficult, which is why I encourage you to contact Jacqueline so that she can explain why the Roadeo has turned into somewhat of a family reunion. And I don’t know of any family reunion which includes the chance to win trophies, prize money, and a trip to the annual CTAA EXPO Roadeo, which has been held in past years at locales such as Austin, Philadelphia, Seattle, Orlando, and Long Beach.

We’re looking forward to seeing you at both events in 2012. Until then, please be safe and have a Happy New Year!

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IPTA Notes

2011 has been very successful for the Illinois Public Transportation Association. Membership has increased, revenues are up, events were sponsored that provided for the enrichment of IPTA members and the Association tackled some very important issues and projects. Some of the highlights of the year include the following.

2011 Fall Conference
IPTA sponsored its annual Fall Conference in September. The conference was held at the beautiful Eagle Ridge Resort in Galena, IL, and was hosted by Jo Daviess County Transit. This year’s fall conference boasted some of the highest attendance numbers in conference history, and there was no shortage of activities for attendees. The conference featured the Vice President for Transportation from the US Chamber of Commerce, Janet Kavinoky. Ms. Kavinoky provided crucial information on what IPTA members should be doing to help further efforts to promote a fully funded federal transportation reauthorization bill. Additionally, sessions were offered on topics ranging from “Green” Transportation to Using Social Media. As always, the conference also offered an opportunity for members to network with one another, which often proves to be the one of the most crucial benefits of Association membership.

Downstate Operating Funding
With the State of Illinois still reeling from the poor economy, the Spring Legislative Session brought budget cut proposals for nearly every industry, including public transportation. IPTA and its lobbyists worked very hard to combat these proposals. In a very tough year, they were not only successful in securing the statutory 10% increase for Downstate Operating Assistance in the state fiscal year 2012 budget, they were instrumental in garnering new Downstate Operating Assistance funding for 20 more counties, bringing the total to 48 rural counties that have received new DOAP appropriations in the last several years. This is a great influx of cash for the fund and will be beneficial to all participants.

Despite the best efforts of IPTA and its lobbyists, late this fall legislation was passed that included language to limit the FY 2012 transfers to the Downstate Public Transportation Fund to $169 million. This is more than $20 million short of the total appropriations from the fund. The change was included in a bill that was designed to move around funding in an effort to save seven facilities around the state that were previously slated for closure. IPTA's lobbyists were able to secure a commitment from staff of the Speaker of the House, Michael Madigan, that if the $169 million is not sufficient to support operating expenditures, the Legislature will find additional funding. This is most certainly a setback for downstate providers, but IPTA will continue to advocate on behalf of downstate providers regarding this issue.

With the State still facing a tremendous budget deficit, it is no surprise that again this year DOAP recipients suffered from the State’s backlog of bills, sometimes waiting as much as five months for reimbursement. IPTA’s Executive Director, Laura Calderon, continued to work with the Comptroller’s office to facilitate payments, especially when members were in critical need. IPTA kept in constant communication with the Comptroller’s office, assuring that no system would be forced to cut service.

Advocacy
IPTA worked closely with the RTA region on the Seniors Ride Free initiative. In January the General Assembly passed SB3778, which limited to which seniors that fixed route operators were required to provide free rides to those whose income qualified them for the circuit breaker program. This legislation is a cost saving measure for our members. IPTA worked as a liaison between the Department on Aging and fixed route providers to help systems and their riders make a smooth transition to the new free rides program.

IPTA's Executive Director, Laura Calderon, attended the American Public Transportation Association’s (APTA) Legislative Conference in March and worked with IPTA federal lobbyist, Ed Graber, to arrange meetings with Congressional staff. Additionally, throughout the year, Laura worked with Ed Graber to keep members apprised of federal transit issues.

— IPTA Notes continued on page 12
In January of 2010, Transit Reservation Information Program (TRIP) through the Coles County Council on Aging was awarded a three-year New Freedom grant to provide mobility management services in Champaign, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Macon, Moultrie, Piatt, Shelby, and Vermilion Counties. TRIP provides a “one call” center to residents and visitors of the 12 counties where they receive scheduling services and assistance finding transportation. TRIP coordinates and arranges transportation for passengers whose transportation needs go beyond their local transportation providers’ normal service areas. Acting as a liaison for the passenger, much like a travel agent, TRIP sets up rides with a provider or with multiple providers and connects them with transfers along the route—getting the passenger from point A to point B. While medical, work, and education trips are a priority, TRIP’s services can be used by the general public, persons with disabilities, and seniors regardless of the reason.

TRIP utilizes existing transportation providers such as public providers, workforce development agencies, human services agencies, organized faith-based providers, and private providers. By coordinating with all of the providers in the region, using established routes and the transportation providers’ cooperative efforts for incidental trips, the passengers are able to access transportation with just one call. Working with these existing transportation providers, TRIP is building new relationships and opportunities for integration and expanding mobility to respond to passenger demand.

In March of 2010, TRIP provided coordination services for the first time. Since then, requests have come in steadily on a daily basis for individual transportation needs. From January 1, 2010 through September 30, 2011, TRIP has coordinated transportation services for 125 individuals with needs beyond the services offered in their residential county. The transportation needs have ranged as far as Paris, Illinois to Springfield, Illinois and even Effingham, Illinois to St. Louis, Missouri. As TRIP continues to grow and expand, the residents of the 12 counties will continue to be the primary benefactors of these coordination services.

From its inception, Coles County Council on Aging and TRIP have known that without the area transportation providers’ cooperation and support for mobility management, our program would not have become a reality. TRIP would like to recognize the key players and thank them for their efforts in making our program successful and helping with development. Central Illinois Public Transit, CRIS Rural Transit, Coles County Dial-A-Ride, East Central Illinois Mass Transit District, Piattran, Rides Mass Transit District, ShowBus, and the HSTP Regional Planning Commission for Region 8 are just a handful of the organizations with which TRIP has had the pleasure of working and whom the passengers rely on for safe and courteous services.

TRIP can be reached Monday through Friday 8:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at 217-639-5167 or Toll Free at 1-855-477-8747. We are your transportation travel agent: “One Call Does It All.”
Lee-Ogle Transportation System Breaks Ground on New Transit Facility

Lee County, Illinois, and the Lee-Ogle Transportation System (LOTS) announced the groundbreaking of their new $2,000,000, 13,800 square foot transit facility at 215 East Progress Drive (near Spectrum Brands), Dixon, on Friday, November 18, at 10:00 AM. LOTS provides public transportation in Lee and Ogle counties from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM M-F through the services of five providers: Lee County Council on Aging and Kreider services in Dixon, Rock River Center and Village of Progress in Oregon, and the Hub City Senior Center in Rochelle.

The Transit Center will house the administrative and central dispatch center for LOTS, as well as provide a 24-hour waiting area for patrons of inter-city and other transit providers. The garage area will accommodate up to 14 vehicles. Plans also include mechanic and washing facilities for the buses and minivans in the LOTS fleet.

The building was designed by the engineering and consulting firm of Willett Hofmann and Associates in Dixon. In speaking of the facility, lead architect Tom Houck states, “Willett, Hofmann & Associates, Inc. is very pleased to be part of the design team for this project. Working with the LOTS staff through the design phase for this much needed facility has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience. The facility has been efficiently designed to accommodate the current needs of both the office staff and vehicle fleet of the Lee Ogle Transportation System and both the building and the site have been designed to be easily expandable to accommodate future growth. We are excited to see the ground “officially broken” for this project and eager for the Lee Ogle Transportation System to have their new home.”

Speaking on behalf of Lee County, County Board Chairman Jim Seeberg commented that “It is . . . a major benefit for the public . . . It will open doors that have been shut in Lee County for a long time. I believe that the more interest Lee County can draw and the more people that see the facilities that Lee County has to offer, the better. This is a commitment to making smart and timely reinvestments, designed to enhance the value of the County . . .”

The transit facility is being funded by a Federal grant under the American Re-investment and Recovery Act (ARRA).
Macoupin County Public Transportation is an on-demand deviated response, door-to-door service. With services offered to a population of about 50,000 Macoupin County residents. Our service hours are Monday – Friday 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and Saturday 7:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Services range from $2.00 to $5.00 round trip in county and require a 24-hour prior notice. We also provide out of county medical and social group trips on a first come first serve basis. These trips require at least a 72-hour prior notice and the fees are $10.00 and up.

Our team consists of our director Kent Tarro, along with a transportation coordinator, a financial officer, two part-time dispatchers and 16 drivers. We have 14 vehicles ranging from a 22-passenger bus to a fuel efficient car. We are currently averaging 22,000 trips annually and hope to increase that to around 48,000 trips annually.

Prior to becoming an operator for the Macoupin County Section 5311 grant, Macoupin County Public Health Department had been providing medical transportation since July 1996 with one seven passenger handicapped accessible van, and had been providing senior transportation since October 2008. In every five year Community Health Plan (1994, 1999, 2004, and 2009) conducted by the health department, public transportation was cited as a need for Macoupin County. Surveys conducted recently in phase two of the ICCT Coordination Primer process also indicated that need, as 60% of the 2,200 people surveyed said the lack of transportation was a serious problem. In addition, over
60% of people surveyed said that they and their families would use public transportation. At the end of the primer process, the Macoupin County Public Health Department was chosen to be the administrator and service operator for the Macoupin County Public Transportation (MCPT) Program.

Lindsey Mathenia, logo creator, from Staunton High School, and Carol Little, Primer PEO leader

Drivers, Paul Hlatko and Gene Rubermeyer

Day group trip to Kimmswick Apple Butter Festival

Peggy Garrison, financial officer

Michelle Rhodes, dispatcher

Michelle Stover, dispatcher
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!

Jaime L. Blatti is the newest HSTP Coordinator/Mobility Manager for Regions 9, 10 and 11. She received her Masters Degree in Urban Transportation Planning and Policy Analysis from the University of Illinois at Chicago earlier in the year. Jaime completed an internship with Will County Land Use Department where she worked closely with long range planners analyzing the Route 53 Corridor, the largest inland port in the United States.

Jaime continues to enjoy her new home at South Central Illinois Regional Planning and Development Commission and continues to learn the importance of rural transportation in Southern Illinois. She says, “Thank you to all of you that have extended a warm welcome and I look forward to making transportation coordination a priority!”

Craig Harper is the new planner and HSTP coordinator for region 2, Illinois, and region 9, Iowa with Bi-State Regional Commission in Rock Island, Illinois. He completed his undergraduate degree from St. Ambrose University in Political Science and Public Administration.

Shortly after graduation, he accepted an internship with Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Springfield, Illinois. There he assisted in coordinating various Environmental Justice (EJ) activities, including all of the Illinois EPA’s, and a work group including a representative from each of the Bureaus of Air (BOA), Water (BOW) and Land (BOL), the Division of Legal Counsel and the Office of Community Relations (collectively, IEPA EJ Work Group).

Craig plans on continuing to pursue a Masters in Public Administration from Drake University through the Quad Cities Graduate Center located on the Augustana College campus in Rock Island, Illinois.

Other than transportation planning, Craig really enjoys spending time with his two year old son, Carter. Craig says, “He is the most amazing thing I have ever experienced, and is the apple of my eye!” He also enjoys fitness, sports, triathlons, and of course an occasional Dave Matthews show (20 and counting), and his dog, Wrigley!
Jill Goforth is the new Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) coordinator for Region 5, which covers Peoria, Woodford, Tazewell, Fulton, Marshall, Stark and Knox Counties. Jill is based in Peoria at the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission.

Jill has lived in Peoria her whole life, except for the time she spent in college. She graduated from Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota, in May 2011, earning a Bachelor’s Degree in Geography, with a focus on Urban Studies. Jill’s previous experience includes internships with the Urban Land Institute of Chicago, the University Avenue Business Association of St. Paul, and the Campaign for a Walkable West Bluff in Peoria.

In her spare time, Jill enjoys practicing yoga, reading at local coffee shops, spending time with family and friends and taking road trips throughout the United States. She is excited to be working in the Peoria area, where she hopes to use her education and experience to make her home town a better place to live.

Ryan McCoy is the new planning intern for the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC). He was brought on to assist with MY TRIP activities, which include conducting rural travel trainings and other projects that involve working with the public. He’ll also assist with the HSTP region 8 update and rural planning grants.

Ryan graduated in May from the University of Illinois, receiving his Bachelor’s Degree from the Department of Urban and Regional Planning.

Eileen Sierra was promoted in June 2011 as the new HSTP Region 8 coordinator. She originally joined Champaign County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) in June 2010 as a mobility coach for the federal United We Ride: Mobility Yes! Transit Riders Information Project (MY TRIP) for DeWitt and Clark Counties. She is co-designing the MY TRIP Toolkit and Travel Training Programs, and is working with local transit advisory boards to increase mobility options and build mobility infrastructure to meet needs in rural Illinois.

In 2007 Eileen received a B.A. in Communication from the University of Maryland at College Park. Eileen is originally from Marietta, GA. She has worked in numerous fields, but is truly a transportation advocate for life. And Eileen says to be careful because if you think you are seeing double at times, then watch out! She has an identical twin sister in the air medical transportation industry located in Alexandria, Virginia.
Grundy County hires first transit system director

Grundy County has named Sherey Zerbian the director of the Grundy Transit System.

Zerbian will manage the day-to-day operations of the system and oversee the administration of the state and federal grants that fund the Grundy County system.

In her previous position as program director for the Community Foundation of Grundy County, Zerbian facilitated and directed the efforts of the Grundy Transit Stakeholders, a group of local agencies, businesses and organizations who joined forces to increase local public transportation capacity and coordinate transit resources in Grundy County.

Working with state and local government and with technical assistance from the Rural Transit Assistance Center at Western Illinois University, the group efforts resulted in additional grant funds for the newly named Grundy Transit System.

The Grundy Transit System was previously known as the GREAT bus. The new name is a reflection of the expansion of the hours of service, the service area covered and the addition of new vehicles and funding.

Over the next 12 months four new buses, including one "green" hybrid bus, will be added to the current fleet of two buses. The new funding will provide more capacity to provide rides and the ability of the system to contract with local agencies, organizations and businesses to provide service for their clients through the use of service contracts.

"The addition of new vehicles and the additional funding which has been secured have expanded the system to the point that we needed a director to oversee all aspects of our public transportation program," said Heidi Miller, interim Grundy County Administrator.

"We look forward to the new service we will be able to offer to Grundy County residents. Sherey's history of program management and her previous work on the expansion efforts have provided the qualities we need to ensure that our system will be responsive to residents' needs, and will continue to grow as new opportunities for funding and vehicles become available."

"Needs assessments conducted in the county over the last few years have shown that affordable, accessible and reliable public transportation is a real need here in Grundy County. Our community efforts have paid off and residents here can look forward to more service as we move forward and continue to build a system that meets the needs of Grundy County," Zerbian said.

Zerbian, a graduate of Northern Illinois University, resides in Minooka with her husband, Dave.

From the “Free Press Newspapers”, September 6, 2011

Editor’s Note: We are pleased to announce that Sherey was recently selected as the newest member of the Rural Transit Assistance Program Advisory Council.

—Transit Movers continued on page 12
The McDonough County Public Transportation bus transfer facility was officially opened on December 2, 2011, with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by state and local officials. The bus transfer facility, which also includes parking for Amtrak passengers using the Macomb depot, will provide a safe and convenient location for fixed route passengers to transfer between buses on the Go West compass routes serving the Macomb community. The facility will be used by 260,000 Go West riders annually. The project was funded by the Illinois Jobs Now capital program through the Division of Public and Intermodal Transportation, Illinois Department of Transportation. The total cost of the project was $600,000, with $525,000 coming from Illinois Jobs Now and $75,000 from the City of Macomb.

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VIN Number: 1FDAE55F53HA49776, 134,794 miles, 6 Liter V8 Diesel
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Maintenance records available.

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618.222.5619

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Specifically, IPTA worked with Transportation for Illinois Coalition (TFIC) and APTA to communicate to the Illinois Congressional delegation about the need for a comprehensive fully funded transportation reauthorization bill. IPTA is continuing to work on this very important issue.

IPTA Executive Director participated in APTA State Association Leaders’ meetings, the RTAC Advisory Council, and Transportation for Illinois Coalition.

Finance
IPTA’s Actual Expenses for fiscal year 2011 were $219,727.12, while revenues were $271,844.97. We ended the year with approximately $134,777.80 cash on hand. Dues revenues collected from both Regular and Associate Members exceeded expectations, as did revenue from interest on IPTA’s checking account and investments.

Strategic Plan
IPTA’s President, Tom Zucker, began discussions with the Board of Directors regarding updating IPTA’s Strategic Plan. The strategic plan is now nine years old, and there seems to be consensus among members that it is time to revisit it. A brainstorming session was held in April, and a decision was made by the Board in July to work with member Universities or Illinois Society for Association Executives to secure a facilitator to facilitate a Strategic Planning session with the membership this winter.

Laura Calderon

--- Transit Movers continued from page 10

Jacob Matsen is the new HSTP coordinator for Regions 1 and 3, effective July of 2011. One of his goals is to work with transit providers in developing strategies that maximize service with fewer resources. Ultimately, he works toward increasing the mobility of all people in his regions.

Matsen was recently appointed by his fellow coordinators to be the representative to the Intercity Bus Steering Committee with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). As a part of this committee, he will assist in the development of an intercity bus marketing campaign, provide input on proposed projects and potential funding, and communicate the benefits of connecting rural and small urban transportation locations.

Jacob’s previous work included the MY TRIP Project where he and fellow colleagues developed the foundation of the project. With his strong background with MY TRIP, he has been able to take many of those strategies and apply them to his position as HSTP coordinator. Prior to MY TRIP, he was a transit driver/driving instructor with CyRide, the city bus service in Ames, Iowa.

Jacob graduated from Iowa State University in December of 2008 with a Bachelor of Science in Community and Regional Planning. He currently resides in La Salle, Illinois. Some of his interests include playing the drums, snowboarding, and boxing.

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