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Upcoming Events:

December 24, 2012—January 2, 2013
RTAC office will be closed
March 6-7, 2013
Illinois Institute for Rural Affairs
Rural Community Economic Development
Conference, Peoria
April 3-4, 2013
RTAC Spring Conference, Springfield
On-Site Driver Training and
Classroom Driver Training
(Call RTAC: 800.526.9943)
I've got Lincoln fever. The long-awaited biopic starring Daniel Day-Lewis has hit the theaters. As reported in the State Journal-Register back in 2010, Day-Lewis and presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin visited Springfield prior to the filming of the movie. They toured the magnificent Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library, the Lincoln Home, the Old State Capitol, and the Lincoln/Herndon Law Offices. It is reported that Day-Lewis was allowed to hold a couple of Lincoln artifacts, which I'm sure he used as a channeling device to prepare for his role.

Like many others I am perpetually fascinated with Lincoln and his life, saddened that at some point the occasional discovery of new Lincoln artifacts will cease. Just today I read in the newspaper that a representative of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum and Library found, in the National Archives in Washington, Lincoln’s signed forms for his pay and mileage reimbursement as a member of Congress.

A couple of years ago I traveled to a rural area not far from Macomb to look for an old cemetery with the gravesites of Lincoln’s relatives who had lived in the La Harpe and Fountain Green area. The headstone for Honest Abe’s uncle is in that cemetery, though he is buried elsewhere in west central Illinois. He had been caught in a big snowstorm and discovered days later frozen in the seat of the wagon he was driving. He was buried on the spot but his headstone was placed with those of his family in that old cemetery. The owner of the farm where the cemetery is located allowed my wife and me to traipse through the place and take photographs. Additionally, at the town cemetery in La Harpe we found a gravestone for one Abraham Lincoln, Honest Abe’s cousin.

President Lincoln possessed numerous qualities, but my favorite ones are his honesty and integrity. I find it ironic that the State of Illinois produced the poster child for honesty and integrity, but today our state is the national poster child for state corruption. Some blame this on the fact that we have more units of government than any state in our nation. While the existence of extra units of government creates more chances for corruption to occur, it does not make honest people become corrupt. Instead it creates more chances for inherently corrupt people to be corrupt.

I forget the exact words of one of Lincoln’s famous quotes, but it has to do with the fact that the way to find out someone’s true character is to give that person some power. In our Illinois rural transit environment, a lot of power comes with granting, receiving, and using that funding. Let’s emulate Abraham Lincoln.
Recently the Illinois Public Transportation Association developed a new strategic plan to guide the organization into the next few years. It had been more than 10 years since the last strategic plan was developed, so an update was needed to provide our association clear direction moving forward. IPTA contracted with a consultant to facilitate the development of the plan.

The first step of the process was to conduct an analysis of the association’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). The SWOT analysis was conducted via an e-mailed worksheet. The worksheet was sent to the entire IPTA membership. A total of 13 members responded. Next, the members identified goals the association should be focusing on. The goals were identified through an e-mailed worksheet sent to the entire membership. After the identification of goals, a web-based survey was used to prioritize the goals. The web-based survey was also sent to all IPTA members. A total of 18 members responded. Of those, 11 respondents identified themselves as rural, five respondents identified themselves as urban, and two respondents identified themselves as both. Finally, a retreat was held in July, to discuss the goals and identify strategies and activities to meet the goals.

I am thrilled with the outcome of our plan, and am very excited for what is in store for IPTA. With consideration of time and budgetary constraints, IPTA’s Board of Directors will begin implementing the goals and strategies of the strategic plan. There will be many opportunities for members to get involved in the organization, and all are strongly encouraged to do so. If you are not an IPTA member, you should be! Those involved with public transportation in Illinois definitely will want to have a seat at the table as we work to advance our agenda. The following reflects the list of finalized goals and strategies developed through the surveys and the membership retreat. More information, including specific activities identified, can be found on the IPTA website <www.ipta-net.org/> in the Members Only section.

**GOAL 1: To enhance awareness of public awareness of public transportation issues**

*Strategy 1: To develop and initiate a media/public awareness campaign*

*Strategy 2: To increase engagement of members in public awareness*

*Strategy 3: To enhance awareness of government officials*

**GOAL 2: To increase external relations with key stakeholders**

*Strategy 1: To increase member participation in governmental affairs*

*Strategy 2: To strengthen IPTA legislative and regulating position within the General Assembly and to government bodies, while increasing member participation in governmental affairs*

*Strategy 3: To improve on existing and increase potential partnerships with associations, governmental entities, or other organizations with common interests.*

*Strategy 4: To pursue joint opportunities for cost savings*

—IPTA Notes continued on page 12
Promotion Idea

Jaime Blatti, new executive director of Lee-Ogle Transportation System, says, “I quickly learned that there was a large gap between the people that used our service and the people that still call it the “senior bus.” Thinking outside the box, my team and I decided that we needed to be creative with generating system revenue to keep the wheels on the road as well as closing the gap between our decision makers and the public. In a few short days, our leaders have stepped up and donated hundreds of dollars and learned about public transit along the way. We are excited to continue this program to support the system and more importantly to support our riders.”

Adopt-a-Rider Program

Lee-Ogle Transportation System is a not-for-profit public transportation service for all persons regardless of age, ability, or disability for all residents in Lee and Ogle Counties.

- In our community, there are residents who would have no access to employment, education, and socialization without public transportation services.
- In our community, there are residents who would not have access to medical treatments without public transportation.
- In our community, there are residents who cannot afford $3.99/ gallon of gas and rely on public transportation.
- In our community, we take care of our own.

Give back this Holiday Season with supporting the transportation disadvantaged by purchasing a punch card to donate! The cards support children to get to school, hard working mothers, dialysis patients, elderly, persons with disabilities, friends, and family!

Full Card $40
Half Card $20

*Please purchase a card at: 629 Palmyra Road Dixon, Illinois 61021 or call 815-288-2117 for more information! Happy Holidays!!!
Regional Maintenance Center Fiscal Year 2012 Statistics

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

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Grundy Transit System
By Sherey Zerbian, Director

The Grundy Transit System (GTS) provides demand response, curb-to-curb and door-to-door service to all Grundy County residents. The county covers 432 square miles, and has a population of 50,063. Grundy County is the third fastest growing county in Illinois, with an increase in population of 33 percent over the last 10 years. The service area covers all of Grundy County, and transportation is provided daily to Joliet in Will County, as well as twice a month service to neighboring La Salle County, through Marseilles and on to Ottawa.

The Grundy Transit System, formerly known as the GREAT Bus, has been in operation in Grundy County since 1999, when the county first received a 5311 grant. At that time the county contracted with a service provider who supplied a bus for the system in addition to the driver, dispatcher and operations manager.

In 2002 the system received its first bus from IDOT, and provided limited service in Grundy County with daily service to nearby Joliet. In 2008, the first bus was replaced, and a second bus was added to the system.

In 2008, Grundy County entered into a partnership with the Community Foundation of Grundy County and numerous local social service agencies. The Grundy Transit Stakeholders group, working with the Rural Transit Assistance Center, completed the Primer Process in 2011. As a result, Grundy County received an appropriation for the Downstate Operating Assistance Program (DOAP), and received the funding for the first time in FY12.

The group also submitted a Consolidated Vehicle Procurement application on behalf of the county in late 2010. The county was granted three buses, two of which have been delivered, the first in December of 2011 and another in January of 2012. One additional bus from the 2010 grant is expected in the spring of 2013. The latest 2012 CVP application has yielded another four medium duty buses, which, when delivered, will bring the total fleet to nine buses.

Although Grundy County has been a 5311 grantee for 13 years, the system provided limited service for most of that time. In 2011, as the result of working with RTAC, the system expanded the hours of service from 7:00 am to 4:00 pm, to the current hours, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm. At the same time, the service area was also expanded to cover the entire county. These changes led to an increase of 87 percent in ridership for the year. In FY12, the addition of the DOAP funds allowed the County to hire a full time director for the transit system. Sherey Zerbian, previously the program director for the Community Foundation of Grundy County, and lead facilitator for the Grundy Transit Stakeholders group, was hired in August of 2012. With a full time director providing continuous marketing and promotion of the Grundy Transit System and the addition of two buses early in 2012, the system has experienced a continued increase in ridership of 30 percent.
“Although the county has had a transit system for 13 years, it feels like a new start-up in many ways” said Zerbian. “The vast majority of Grundy County residents are not even aware that there is public transportation available in our county. Much of my time is spent talking with groups and making presentations about the system and how to use it. Word is starting to get around, evidenced by the continued increase in use . . . the need is there, we just have to keep working to get the word out,” Zerbian explained.

In March of 2012, an RFP was published resulting in a new service provider for the system, Illinois Central School Bus, LLC. With an office based in Morris, Illinois, the company began providing service in September of 2012. Currently the staff consists of an operations manager, one full time dispatcher, one part time dispatcher, and four drivers. Illinois Central also provides the maintenance for the buses at their on-site garage. Several drivers from their school bus operations are being cross-trained as back-up drivers for the system, and will eventually become drivers for the Grundy Transit System as the new buses arrive. With the new provider, the system is now able to provide expanded dispatch hours from 7:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday.

The most popular destination within the county continues to be Morris, the county seat. When leaving the county, the destination of choice is Joliet, with stops including the Metra Train Station, Westfield Mall, and Joliet Junior College. Medical trips to the Joliet area are on the rise, as are work related trips. The expansion of service hours as well as the additional vehicles has allowed increased service to Joliet, and future plans include additional service to accommodate Joliet Junior College students, as well as service to neighboring Shorewood, a popular destination for shopping.

The most common request within Grundy County borders is for expanded service into the evening hours to accommodate nontraditional work schedules, and weekend service, which is needed primarily for dialysis patients. As additional funding resources and vehicles are acquired, there are plans to expand service to meet these needs.

“We are a small system, but one with a tremendous potential for growth.” said Zerbian. “Our goal going forward is to continue to promote the services we have, and make sure everyone in need of transportation knows what is available to them as a Grundy County resident.”

“The response to our new provider has been great, and ridership continues to increase, so we are clearly on the right track.” Zerbian continued, “This service is all about getting people where they need to go, so that they can live the lives they want to live.

What’s more important than that?”
**TRANSIT MOVERS**

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

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**John Metzinger** became director of Danville Mass Transit in June 2012. Metzinger formerly worked at CityBus, in Lafayette, Indiana, where he was manager of development. He was responsible for planning, marketing, and customer service. During his tenure, Metzinger helped launch the downtown trolley service and other service expansions, and saw CityBus ridership grow by more than 175%. Metzinger also was involved in decisions to invest in “green technology,” including hybrid diesel-electric buses and wind turbines to power facilities.

Metzinger is looking forward to leading Danville Mass Transit under the direction of Mayor Scott Eisenhauer, and acknowledges the legacy of excellent community service from prior mass transportation director Dick Brazda, who retired last year.

Metzinger received his Bachelor of Arts in visual communications Administration in 2012 from Purdue University in 1990, and his Master of Business Administration in 2012 from Indiana Wesleyan University. He lives in Danville with his partner and son.

When not at work, Metzinger enjoys working out, bicycling, hiking, and reading. He is also a visual artist, and wishes he had more time to paint.

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**Roger Kelzer** has been the assistant director for Jo Daviess County Transit, which is located in the beautiful city of Galena, since January 2012. Roger has several years experience as a program coordinator for The Workshop in Galena, and was a small town hardware store owner. Roger also served 20 years in the U.S. Army Reserve, and is currently a member of the military’s Retired Reserve.

Roger has a Bachelor of Science in Education from Western Illinois University in Macomb. He is married to Michelle. They have two daughters in college, and a son in high school. In his spare time Roger enjoys spending time with his family, and the great outdoors, especially boating and hunting.
During our conversation, Rich Machala shared the correct pronunciation of his last name. Rich says, “A curly q thing goes through the “L” that makes it a “W” and the “CH” sounds like a “H”.” It sounds like an American Indian word, but is actually Polish. Rich says he can’t imagine what his mail would look like if he pronounced his name correctly.

Rich’s Beginnings
Rich grew up in Cicero, Illinois. He went to a public grade school until it was time to receive his first communion, then his mother transferred him to a Catholic school. The Catholic school was way ahead of the public school. They knew how to write, so his mother taught him cursive writing in one day. Rich claims that’s why he writes the way he does. Rich went to a Catholic high school in Chicago. After high school Rich says he made the assumption that he was going to go into his father’s screen printing business. He asked his father, “When do I go to work?” Rich says his dad looked at him like he was nuts. Rich asked, “Well aren’t I going to work in your company?” His father said, “I don’t want you to have the same crappy life that I had.” Rich thought, uh-oh! What am I going to do now?

He took the summer off, and at the end of August, his mother said, “Okay, you’ve had your two months off, you have one week to get a job, or else I’m kicking you out. He got a job selling men’s clothes. His first store was in Berwyn. In six months he was the store manager. Rich was the youngest store manager they ever had. A lot of what he did was going in and helping problem stores. Once again he spent a lot of time back in Chicago because that’s where the problem stores were. He stayed with them for over four years. At that time he could see the writing on the wall; he could see that the stores weren’t going anywhere, and would eventually fold.

Rich applied to Plaid Stamps (do you remember S&H Green Stamps, King Korn stamps?) and managed a store for them. He worked his way up to assistant district manager. His area went from Waukegan to Gary, Indiana, to Rock Island, but most of the stores were right in the Chicago area. At that time Rich and his wife Ellen bought a house in Wheaton that was five minutes from the toll way, which cut down on his travel time. But as luck would have it, Plaid Stamps’ number one account was going to pull out of the Midwest, and if Rich wanted to stay with the company he would have had to move to either Detroit or Cleveland. Neither of which Rich or Ellen were interested in. Then, as Rich says, “Another one of my really bad choices in life” was that Plain Stamps asked him if he would stick around and close stores because he was already familiar with the stores problems, or to setup the displays before the stores opened. Closing a store was a Saturday and Sunday job. Rich would arrive at the store on either Friday evening or early Saturday morning, inventory the store, pack it all up, and ship it out by Sunday evening. It was all overtime for him. When he got down to the last store, which was his store, he thought he might as well leave since he felt there wasn’t any point in closing the last store. He resigned, and at that point he found out that the stock that he had in the company had gone from $86 per share to $4 per share. All the money he made closing the stores, he lost in his pension. That was not a good deal.

That’s how Rich and Ellen wound up in Galena. Rich was out of a job. He and Ellen decided to try living some place other than the Chicago area. They had bought five acres of property outside of Galena. They pulled a mobile home onto their property, sunk a well, and put in a septic system. The area that they bought is now all developed, but at the time, only one other family lived on the 250 acres. Rich says, “It was pretty dark out
there, it was pretty lonely out there too, but it was beautiful. We were about a half mile from the Mississippi River, up on a hill. It was a bad time too; we had tremendous snow storms the two years we were out there. We had a tornado go through. It was just bad. But that was when the twins were born. My plan was to build a bedroom onto the mobile home.” They found out a week before Ellen gave birth that they were having twins. So, while Ellen was in the hospital, Rich decided that he wasn’t going to build a gigantic additional bedroom, and began looking for houses in Galena. There were three with three or four bedrooms. When Ellen looked at the three houses, she didn’t like any of them. But they couldn’t stay in the mobile home because they already had a son, and there wouldn’t be enough room for two more babies. The realtor suggested that they make an offer on one of the houses. They offered half of the asking price, and the sellers agreed. Rich says at that time Galena was pretty run down.

The retail job opportunities weren’t very prevalent in Galena, but Rich found a job working for Montgomery Ward. They promised that he would temporarily be in the Lawn and Garden Department, then be put into the management program. He was in the Lawn and Garden Department all summer. “So I complained, so they moved me to Appliances, which is a little better than Lawn and Garden, so I complained, so they moved me to Men’s Clothing, which is where I started. I didn’t want to be in Men’s Clothing, so I complained.” And finally Rich’s boss said, “I don’t think we’re going to make you happy.” Rich said, “No, you told me that I was going to be in this management training program, and I don’t see any training program.” Rich’s boss said, “Well, would you like to quit?” Rich said, “Yeah.” His boss asked, “When?” Rich said, “How about now?”

Rich says that was a stupid move, “Because in Chicago, I had walked out of one job and into another job in two days. (Here) I was out of work for seven months.” He was to the point that his clothes were packed and he was ready to go back to Chicago to look for a job. He gave the employment agency one more try. He called them and they said that they had a sales job. It was a company that sold nonfood items (health and beauty, pet supplies, toys, etc.) to grocery stores. This company was just getting into Wisconsin when Rich started with them with five stores. Rich was promoted to assistant manager, then district manager. Then the companies that sold the food to grocery stores started fighting back by telling the grocery store that they either bought everything from them or they wouldn’t sell them the food items. Once again, Rich was soon out of a job.

That’s how Rich ended up at the Jo Daviess Workshop. In 1984 before becoming transit director, he was The Workshop’s marketing director. He was responsible for getting jobs for The workshop. He learned about time studies and labor laws. A little twist on all of this is that one of the first businesses at The Workshop was a screen printing business. A local screen printer in Galena was making signs, but because they were a screen printer, everyone in the area would ask them to screen print shirts. It became such a nuisance that they gave The Workshop the equipment, and taught the folks at The Workshop how to use it. Rich and his employees built that business from a $700 profit the first year to $1,500,000 by the fifth year of operations.

Transportation
Client transportation started in 1986 at the Jo Daviess Workshop, and general public transportation started in 1988. The workshop had applied for two vehicles under the 5310 grant.

In 1987 Jo Daviess Workshop received a letter from an Area Agency on Aging, informing the five county area about an opportunity to begin public transportation. Rich went to the meeting in Dixon, and Betty Green (the grandmother of rural public transportation from Rides Mass Transit District) and Dave Spacek (IDOT) were there. Rich said, “Betty was the one who knew what was going on.” Rich sat across the table from Dave. Dave said IDOT had all this money from the federal government and they were looking for someone to give it to. BANG! Rich said, “You have somebody to give it to!” And out of the
five representatives that were there, Jo Daviess Workshop was the only one to follow through. “We were by ourselves for a long time.” The ribbon cutting was in 1991.

When Rich started, he said there were twenty seven counties that were involved in rural public transit, and probably 13 of them were in Rides Mass Transit District. Now almost the whole state has funded public transportation.

Rich was also on the Galena Zoning Board and Planning Commission. He spent years working for Galena. “I started with Zoning because of this garage project. One of the reasons it took two years to get it done was because of zoning. There was a thing called the PUD, Plan Unit Development on the books for the City of Galena. But there were no PUDs. We were the first one that was going to be a PUD. So they were writing the rules as they went along, saying, ‘this is the criteria you have to meet.’ So, we’d meet the criteria, go back to zoning, and they would say, ‘you really need to do this also.’” Rich would ask, “Where does it say that?” And the zoning board would just write it in. It took over seven months to get the zoning permit for the building. Rich says, “That experience got me interested in zoning. And when there was an opening, I volunteered to go on the Zoning Board, and became quite knowledgeable in county and municipal zoning. That was something that I really enjoyed for a long time.”

A Transit Story
“There was the woman who used a mobility device that we transported to the local Adult Day Care Program for over a year that none of the drivers could figure out if she was dead or not. The drivers would report that she never moved, never said anything, and never even opened her eyes. But as long as we kept getting paid, we kept giving her rides.”

Family
Rich and his wife Ellen have six children and six grandchildren. The newest grandson arrived on November 10, 2012.
GOAL 3: To increase administrative support

Strategy 1: To provide more resources to support management functions

GOAL 4: To review and update membership program

Strategy 1: To increase membership opportunities within IPTA

Strategy 2: To review and possibly expand membership categories and increase membership in various categories

Strategy 3: To increase opportunities for member to member interaction online

GOAL 5: To provide member relations and respond to the educational needs of members

Strategy 1: Communicate effectively with members on issues pertinent to our organization

Strategy 2: To facilitate training and technical assistance recognized by accreditation resources

Strategy 3: To promote understanding among operators and foster respect for different funding streams

GOAL 6: To review and update dues structure

Strategy 1: To analyze existing dues structure

Strategy 2: To increase non-dues revenue

GOAL 7: To analyze current governance structure

Strategy 1: To review and update governance structure

Laura Calderon