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DTA Fall Conference

We have two remaining articles from the Fall Conference that will be placed in the December Tidbit.

Enjoy reminiscing!

Jacque Senger,
DTA Executive
Director

Human Resources Panel

Ali Rood, Mobility Manger
Cities Area Transit - Grand Forks, ND

Tangee Bouvette, Gretchen Guetter, Linsey Rood and Haley Rosaasen of the City of Grand Forks Human Resources Department presented and answered questions related to working with employees.

The first topic covered was Interviewing and Recruitment. One of the main takeaways here was the importance of asking behavioral/situational questions during an interview. This will help assess future employee behavior and how he or she will problem solve on the job. Another takeaway was selling the non-monetary benefits of a position to applicants, such as the ability to impact passengers' lives on a daily basis.

The next topic covered was Drugs and Alcohol. The panel gave a history of why the FTA does random and post-accident testing and what is required of public transit providers to comply. Reasonable suspicion testing was also covered.

The last and most interactive part of the session covered Communication and Difficult Conversations. The panel did some role playing to demonstrate the importance of nonverbal communication when working with employees. Conflict management styles and situations were also discussed. The session was very informative and involved good discussion among attendees.

CTAA, Scott Bogren

Terry Hoffman, Director

Watertown Area Transit, Inc. - Watertown, SD

Change is inevitable in the transit world, and rural providers need to be prepared to adapt their service to meet the demands of the time.

Scott Bogren, Community Transportation Association of America Executive Director addressed many issues including the changing times when he spoke to transit providers at the annual Dakota Transit Association's Fall Conference in September in Grand Forks.

"Change is coming in many forms and you all need to design your service to fit the demands of the people you serve," said Bogren. "The demographics of the country are changing and the ever-changing technological advances are creating this demand."

Bogren has been working with, writing about and covering the community and public transportation industry for nearly three decades. His experience with CTAA includes being Editor-in-Chief of Community Transportation magazine; crafting the Associations' various legislative, policy and regulator positions on Capitol Hill; and shaping CTAA's communications, training and leadership activities.

Shrinking populations in rural areas will create obvious changes in how transportation is provided in those areas, but the results are not what most would anticipate. According to Bogren, 60 percent of the population across America was located in rural areas. That figure is now 15 to 20 percent.

"People moving to the urban sites actually creates more of a demand on the rural areas for transportation," he said "Transportation become

more of a necessity as the services people need or even family they may have relied on move away from them."

Declining population in the nation's larger cities has the opposite effect. The fewer people there, the less transportation is required. The small urban areas are seeing the most change and providers will need to be in tune with those changes.

"Pay attention to the census figures and base your calculations on per capita figures," said Bogren. "Looking at numbers in that manner will show places like Athens, GA and Madison, WI providing more rides than transit services in Atlanta and Milwaukee."

The number of people becoming seniors in the near future will have a major effect on how transit operators run their systems. According to census figures, 10,000 people will turn 65 every day for the next 20 years. Those people are accustomed to going where they want, when they want and will not suddenly accept the fact they may have to rely on alternate services for transportation. Much of this population can be found in the heartland of rural America. The number of people listed as having disabilities will also increase.

"You are on the front lines of this emerging population and need to create methods to make this work for these people," said Bogren. "The thought process of people will find transit if you put it out there has changed. You must bring the service to the people."

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CTAA

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Bogren also addressed the concerns of funding and what lies ahead for providers with the change in administrations in Washington, D.C. The Highway Trust Fund went in the red in 2007 and no fix has been brought forth by lawmakers since. Increased spending on Surface Transportation projects has had a major effect on dollars taken from transit providers which had been planned to be used for capital purchases.

Bogren said the combination of more programs seeking funds from the same pot and no additional funds added have created the dilemma. “Demands have increased, but funds haven’t – it’s pretty simple,” he said. “Anybody mentioning gas tax in D.C. is a very unpopular person, but something needs to be done by 2020. Urban systems will find a way to survive, but rural transit systems won’t.”

Competition from other sources such as Uber or driverless vehicles is a threat Bogren says should be taken seriously. The marketing plans used by these entities are very sound and they will have an effect on our businesses in the future. “We need to look at how and why they are winning customers and adapt,” he said.

CTAA is making a lot of changes according to Bogren and the organization has never been in a better position to assist transit providers. “We still feel the best ideas come from you the providers, you need to let us know what’s going on.”

Heart of Change

Ali Rood, Mobility Manger

Cities Area Transit - Grand Forks, ND

Dawn Kaiser, Joy Refueler, led a session on dealing with change in the workplace. When a new policy or procedure is put in to place, like using new software, it is often met with resistance from those who are required to change the way they do things. This can be challenging for leaders of change.

Dawn used an exercise to remind us all how uncomfortable change can be. She asked the group to sign our name three times, first with our dominant hand and then with our non-dominant hand. She then asked the group to sign our name another three times, not specifying which hand to use. We all went back to using our dominant hand because that was most comfortable and familiar. We do not change our habits easily! Dawn encouraged us to be patient and take the time to work with team members who are not thrilled about changes.

Leaders must be confident in explaining the reasons or benefits of a big change. Teams must be given ample time to prepare for and adjust to change.

SD DOT Quarterly Meeting

Palace Transit - Mitchell, SD

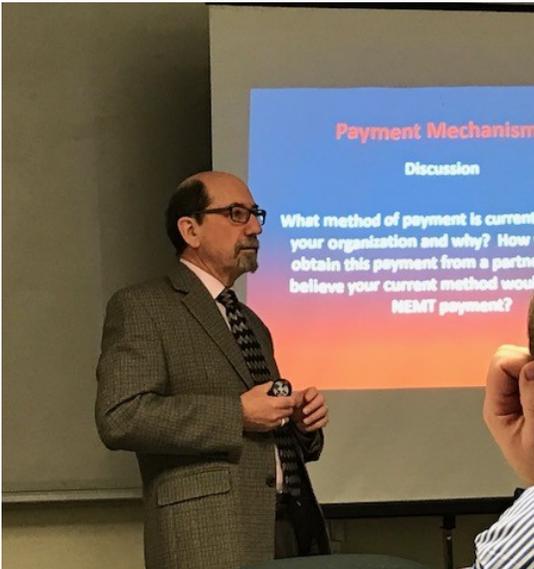


South Dakota transit providers meet for their quarterly meeting in Sioux Falls on November 7th and 8th.

The DOT gave a funding overview and discussed Transit Provider Efficiencies. Transit providers had the opportunity to give their ideas and suggestions as to how to make the state transit program more efficient.

The transit providers also discussed the upcoming Coordination Plan Development and gave updates about their transit systems during a round table discussion.

Rod Fortin from the SD Legislative Audit gave a presentation about Fraud and internal controls. He gave many examples and law references on what to look for in our agencies and how to prevent fraud.



The transit providers also had Reginald Knowlton, from CTAA, give a Contract Development training.

Reginald “Rex” Knowlton is from Philly.

He has twin granddaughters and a 3 year old grandson. Rex’s wife is a teacher, and his daughter is a lawyer.

He was previously in the trucking industry and moved into transit.

Training Update - Linda Freeman, PASS Coordinator

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As of this date, I have no information to add to the November Tidbit except to wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving!

Grant Writing Seminar, Dr. Lori Garnes

Terry Hoffman, Director

Watertown Area Transit, Inc. - Watertown, SD

Writing grants can be challenging for some and second nature for others. The key to being a successful grant writer is to work as a team and not put all the work in your own lap.

Grant writing should always be done as a team and is the sharing of ideas between those team members according to Dr. Lori Garnes, Associate Director of Development for the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities. “When you’re writing any grant, no matter the size, include as many of your organization as you can.”

Dr. Garnes was one of the guest speakers from Minot State University who addressed those in attendance at the 2017 annual Dakota Transit Association’s Fall Conference in Grand Forks in September. She has been affiliated with MSU since 1996, initially serving as an adjunct lecturer and grant worker. Since 2000, she has served as the Special Education Department and is currently the Special Education Department chair.

Experienced grant writers will not only come up with a winning product, but they will involve a host of people in the development of the grant. Bring in board members, involve staff, engage stakeholders, share ideas and develop a list of checks and balances from which to work. “Writing a grant doesn’t have to be difficult,” said Dr. Garnes “Delegate the work as needed, but keep the ball moving forward.”

Knowing your community is a must. Learn what businesses offer grant opportunities and research them diligently. Every community has foundations which offer grants annually. Identify medical facilities and opportunities they may have available. Work with city and county governments when applying for funds. There may be opportunities available no other organizations have tapped into.

Most important is to understand what you are funding and be prepared to sell the item to the team, the public and those reading the grant applications. “One thing to remember about those reading grants, they will only fund those proposals they can understand,” said Dr. Garnes.

Dr. Garnes stressed the importance of understanding and completing the application to the fullest. Leaving a request unfulfilled will cause the grant reader to eliminate the application immediately. Reading and editing the content of the draft is very important and should be done several times over before submitting the final draft.

If a grant writer can’t take the time to meet all of the requirements listed in the application, then securing the funds is apparently not that important to them,” said Dr. Garnes.

Happy Thanksgiving

From your Executive Director and friend, I wish each and everyone of you and your families a Happy Thanksgiving.

Remember, everyone is fighting a battle of some sort, so be kind!

Jacque Senger, DTA Executive Director

*Thought for the
Month of November...*

*Don't chase your dreams...
catch them*

DTA
Dakota Transit
Association

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Thanks to all!

- Jacque

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