



TRANSIT TIDBITS

**Issue
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July 2020

Dennis Ulmer...Over 35 Years, Still Smiling Behind a Mask

Gena Bowar, Manager

Dickinson Public Transit - Dickinson, ND

Since being established in 1979, Elder Care/Dickinson Public Transit has not always had the same name or the same role. What started with one van used for Stark County Senior Meals and Bus Service, evolved to a transit service branch under the Stark County Council on Aging with multiple fleets operation by September 1991.



Since inception there have been 28 vehicles that have provided service to residents and visitors of Dickinson and the surrounding areas, which includes the 12 vehicles currently in use today.

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DTA's Fall Rodeo & Conference

Watertown, SD

September 12 - Rodeo

September 13 - Rodeo
Awards Breakfast

September 14 & 15 -
Conference

Ramkota Hotel &
Watertown Event Center
(605) 886-8011

ULMER

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Elder Care and Dickinson Public Transit have seen a lot of employees come and go throughout the 41 years, approximately 370 different faces. However, for over 35 years, there has been one employee who has seen it all. Dennis Ulmer began as a driver in November 1984. Over the years Dennis has become such a staple to Dickinson Public Transit that people know him by name, face and his current vehicle, Apple 2.



Dennis receiving award from Darrell Francis, Bus Rodeo Coordinator. Dennis took 1st place for North Dakota in 2001 at DTA Bus Rodeo then competed at the National Rodeo in Austin, TX.

When asked what inspired him to work for Elder Care, Dennis says, "My family owned a gas station and I was driving school bus at the time. We got to know Charlie, who was a driver for Elder Care, and he was retiring soon. I started working part time the summer of 1984 and when Charlie retired, I started working full time." Dennis delivered meals to the seniors in Dickinson, as well as multiple towns in southwest North Dakota including transporting people to places they needed to be.

What kept Dennis working here for 35 plus years? Dennis says that, "It's a great job to have. I was pretty young when I started. I gave rides to elderly people and they grew on me. They were very educational, and I learned a lot from them. I enjoy helping people." One of the most memorable moments that stands out when Dennis thinks about his years of providing transit service, "I competed in the DTA bus rodeos for years. When I was competing at the national rodeo in Austin, Texas, I had one mistake, but I still finished in the top five that year."

Dennis has seen a lot of happenings and changes in Dickinson. The city population increased from approximately 16,000 in 1985 to a peak of 23,520 people in 2015 before decreasing about 2,000 people to today's current population of 21,835. When a tornado ripped through the southside of Dickinson in 2011, Dennis was there to help get people transported to safety.

The oil boom came and went between the years of 2010-2015, subsequently the number of rides increased and then decreased again when the boom ended. In more recent days, since March 13, 2020 to be exact, we had to modify and adjust everything we do as a transit agency because of the looming COVID-19 pandemic sweeping the globe.

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“We offer an opportunity to ride. I think we are doing the best we can with protecting us and our riders. We are the most equipped and educated transit service... here in town.”

Dennis was asked if other than orders from the President or Governor, does he foresee our services being shut down for any reason in Dickinson? His response was “Maybe if the number of cases in Dickinson increase out of control or if the staff gets sick. You just don’t know what is going to happen.”

For an employee that has over 35 years of experience, a pandemic is something he was unprepared for, something none of us expected. Now as the drivers do their pre-trip inspections, they double check that there is ample Lysol spray, disinfecting wipes, face masks and hand sanitizer.

Even though the facemasks hide the smiles, the drivers still love their jobs and the riders appreciate the extra safety precautions. Who would have predicted that this would be the new normal? With many years of service, Dennis and Dickinson Public Transit will be here adjusting to the new normal to meet the transit needs of Dickinson and the surrounding community.



New Member Appointed to the Dakota Transit Association Board of Directors

Adam Sharkey, River Cities Public Transit, has been appointed to the DTA Board of Directors. Adam will be taking over the position of Randy Hartman who retired as of June 30, 2020.

Adam brings to the table a lot of transit experience as he has been with the River Cities Public Transit since 2012.

Welcome Adam!

Training Update

Linda Freeman (701) 848-6480

lindaafreeman1@gmail.com

Hopefully we will be able to reschedule the Minot and Valley City classes before the end of the year. The classes at Pierre were cancelled due to lack of participation, and we will be holding the Dickinson class with a little adjustment.

Beginning July 1, we will be teaching the new 7.0 version of the PASS class. Since this class covers a major portion of what is covered in the Maltreatment Awareness Class, we will not be offering the Maltreatment Awareness Class in the future. My hope is that we will be able to provide PASS and Defensive Driving classes in a full 2 days instead of needing 3 days.

Another option that is available to you all is to have your drivers take the online version of PASS. The only thing the drivers will need after the online has been completed is the hands on securement process with a certified trainer supervising.

Dickinson

Thursday, July 23-Friday, July 24, 2020 with full Pass, Pass Recertification, and Defensive Driving.

PASS—July 23 & 24 from 9 am to 5:00 pm on day 1 and 9am to 2pm on day 2.

PASS Recertification - July 24 from 9 am to 2 pm

Defensive Driving - July 24 from 2 pm to 5 pm

Hotel Information: Comfort Inn of Dickinson – 493 Elk Drive. Phone-701-264-7300. You will need to call to make your reservation under the Dakota Transit Association Block to get state rates. Block is set up for nights of July 22, 23 & 24th. Deadline for motel reservation was July 10th but if you ask for state rates, you may still be able to get them.

Aberdeen

Monday, December 28-Tuesday, December 29, 2020 with full Pass, and Pass Recertification offered.

PASS - December 28 & 29 from 9am to 5pm

PASS Recertification - December 29 from 9am to 5pm

Hotel information and class location to be determined at a later date.

Other classes besides those scheduled and proposed can be arranged by contacting Linda by phone or e-mail.

Keep safe and kudos to you for safely providing your services during this hard time!

Transit Retirement

Jessica Pickett, Director
Palace Transit - Mitchell, SD

As I sit here trying to think about how I can possibly write this article about an amazing, hard working, delightful, thoughtful, smart person, and so many more adjectives to describe her, of course my mind goes to my favorite show “The Office.” Now I’m not referring to Jolynn “Jo” Hanson to being exactly like Dwight Schrute, but her loyalty to Palace Transit and knowledge of public transportation is bar none and certainly reminds me to Dwight’s loyalty to Dunder Mifflin and his knowledge of the paper industry. For those of you who have never seen “The Office” we will have a discussion later, but now I want to acknowledge the greatest asset Palace Transit has ever had (yes all who have worked at Palace Transit will agree with that statement).



I’m remembering “The Office” episode where Dwight temporally left Dunder Mifflin and the office plants started to die and little things around the office weren’t getting done; yet no one knew that Dwight is the one who did all those little things. That is exactly how we feel about Jo! There are so many little things, along with all the big things, Jo does around the office that we don’t even know about. She is truly the one who keeps everything running. Now we can say it’s because of all of her years of service at Palace Transit, but we all know it’s because of her work ethic and dedication to do all these things. In fact the other day we couldn’t figure out why the office felt so hot. We checked the thermostat and it was set at the right temperature, but it was still set to heat, not cool...that is something Jo always took care of. The phrase “Jo Knows” is used frequently in our office because she simply knew everything we needed.



She is also the office mom who takes care of everyone, from the passengers, to the staff, to all city employees. She has personally taken employees to the doctor when they needed it, made sure our children were at the right place at the right time (yes, she is my kids emergency contact at school), knew when we weren't feeling the best and filled in, and was the best ear to tell all of our problems to. No matter what she has going on, she always has a smile on her face.

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RETIREMENT

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Jo is always so thoughtful of others. She is always sending out cards, making fun things to give to staff, giving out appreciation gifts or making a cute treat. Her talents never ceased to amaze me.



Words cannot describe how much we are going to miss our Minion loving Transit Operations Supervisor, Jolynn Hanson! Employees come and go but this is going to be a hard one to see go. As everyone in the community says, Jo IS Palace Transit! I would like to share a special thank you to her family for sharing Jo with us and the community. Enjoy your retirement Jo!!!

Transit New Normal

Terry Hoffman, Co-Director

Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc. - Watertown, SD

With our world being turned upside down this spring and summer, some of us were pondering what the "new normal" will look like.

Will there be a new normal? How will it compare to the normalcy we were used to? Do we want to return to our old normal or will new ways better benefit us as a society? So many questions to be pondered and no real idea of what the answers will be. That actually sounds like a normal day in the transit world to me.

At Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc., we view our world as ever changing with new updates, rules and regulations regarding how we operate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

I imagine every transit project has the same basic protocol, with their own unique twists and turns. We at CTWSI feel we have learned a few safety lessons we will keep in our pocket and continue to use going forward.

One thing is for certain, we as administrator need to continue to lead the fight to keep our staff and riders safe. We need to provide the leadership for our respective staff members and continue to promote transit service in our communities we serve.

There are many days it would be easy to throw in the towel, stick our heads in the sand and call it a day. Today is not that day and neither is tomorrow.

Transit professionals are just that - professionals - and we will ride this out together and be better for it. Have a great day.

CTAA Discussion on the HEROES & INVEST Act

Tom Wanttie, Manager
Aberdeen Ride Line - Aberdeen, SD

I recently sat in on a ZOOM Meeting with CTAA personnel. Scott Bogren led the meeting. Like all of us here, Scott spoke of meeting through ZOOM for almost every meeting they have.

Scott talked about new legislation coming and what might happen with it.

- Invest Act – marked up last week in DC, voting on it next week. Way & Means or Finance Committee need to be involved before it will pass.
- Administration Bill – coming but no way to pay for it so most likely will die.
- CARES Act 2.0 – Heroes Act, Senate said they will finish by EOM, but has had no movement lately.
- Appropriations for 2021 – will include Police reform most likely.
- Congress will recess in August, come back for a couple weeks in September and then be off until after the election.

We talked about state conferences and what everyone is planning that is going to have one. One state is going to have theirs in two weeks. They plan to let us all know how it goes after it is completed. I shared with everyone our plans for DTA.

Scott said he is hearing that most will have breaks served by hotel staff or individually packaged snacks. All meals will be plated, no buffets. Many vendors are willing to provide branded PPE for conference attendees; all you have to do is ask.

If we need any training that CTAA can help with contact Karen by email at souza@ctaa.org. CTAA Expo 2020 information has been updated on their website.

It was a very informative meeting and it was good to hear what other Associations are doing around the country during these unsettled times.

REMINDER:

All the registration forms for the DTA Fall Conference & Rodeo Guidelines for 2020 are on line. Please get your registration forms in as soon as possible to help your DTA Board of Directors in making decisions.

Thank You!

Tidbit Articles

Please contact me with articles for your Transit Tidbit.

Recycle

Please share your Transit Tidbit with your staff and any interested person(s).



Address

Directors, please check with your bookkeepers as well as the rest of your staff to assure they have the correct DTA mailing address.

Thanks to all!

- Jacque

www.dakotatransit.org

Thought for the month of July 2020

***"The decisions we make,
make the life we live."***



Jacque Senger
DTA Executive Director

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