



# Transit Tidbits

## THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH MARCH 2022

Doing nothing is hard,  
you never know when you're done!

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## TRAINING UPDATE

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The classes in Devils Lake are set for March 23 & 24, 2022 as follows:

**PASS:** March 23-8:00 am to 2:00 pm and March 24-8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

**DEFENSIVE DRIVING:** March 23-2:00 pm to 5:00 pm.

**PASS Recertification:** March 24-8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

We are limiting the number on these classes due to space so if you plan to send anyone, please let me know right away.

The classes will be held at the Devils Lake Senior Center: 202 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE.

We have several trainers in both states, so please contact me via phone or email. (see contact information above) if you would like to host a class during 2022. Thank You!

## Ride to Wellness Grant

Terry Hoffman, Co-Executive Director

Community Transit of Watertown-Sisseton,  
Inc.

Coordination and consolidation are terms all transit providers have become more familiar with in recent years. River Cities Public Transit and Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc. are two transportation projects living out those ideals on a daily basis.

The two South Dakota providers along with Vermillion Public Transit pooled their talents producing a grant in 2021 to provide increased travel opportunities for those with limited or no options. The trio identified Veterans, Native Americans, and the elderly whose transportation needs were not being met.

RCPT has been at the forefront of the battle to supply veterans with the travel opportunities they require. The Pierre-based project has been a part of the Highly Rural Transportation Grant (HRTG), an agreement supplying transportation for honorably discharged veterans to and from medical appointments and veteran benefit appointments across the region at no cost to the veteran.

The participants have to reside in counties with a population of fewer than seven people per square mile to qualify for the service.

Our staff realized there were still gaps in service to many individuals needing transportation to medical appointments and we also realized the need to streamline our reservation process,” said Ron Baumgart, Executive Director of RCPT. “Our hope is this will allow medical facilities and individuals to eventually schedule their own rides.”

When CTWSI consolidated in 2019, they were invited to join RCPT and provide rides to veterans in the northeast quarter of the state. Others involved in this program include Prairie Hills Transit (Spearfish), People’s Transit (Huron,) and ROCS Transit (Wagner).

The issue with the grant is it leaves out a large portion of the veteran population in the state. Veterans living in counties that do not qualify as highly rural are not eligible.

“The Highly Rural Transportation grant has been awesome for many, but we were receiving a lot of requests from those in the more populated areas,” said Kathy Holman, Co-Executive Director of CTWSI. “We entered discussions with administrators at Pierre and Vermillion and decided to write a separate grant in hopes of filling more gaps in transportation.”

While that grant is alive and well, administrators in RCPT, CTWSI, and VPT were searching for a way to provide transportation to the vets and other groups in the more populated counties. Coordination meetings between the three entities sparked conversation leading to the writing of the “Rides to Wellness” grant. Each transit project was responsible for contacting the key stakeholders, collecting letters of support, and creating the document which eventually earned the group \$90,000. Part of the process was to ensure the ability to make the grant sustainable into the future. The development of a software piece was a key component of being awarded the grant.

Educating the stakeholders on the use of the software will provide them the ability to schedule their own rides while allowing the transit dispatchers to determine which trips they could perform and when. User-friendly apps for the passengers are also slated to be developed in hopes of allowing self-scheduling. “We have been working with Shah Software on developing a user-friendly site that can be used by any type of device,” said Baumgart. “The challenge will be educating the medical facilities and customers to use the new technology.”

“Rides to Wellness” was rolled out late in 2021 and early returns are pointing towards a successful venture on all fronts. Veterans, the elderly and Native Americans struggling to pay for or even find transportation are finding their way to important medical appointments – and at no cost to them.

Sustaining the grant may prove to be a daunting task, but this is a challenge administrators of the grant feel they can meet.

“Securing funds for any venture is always a challenge but coordinating the talents and resources of everyone lessens that burden,” said CTWSI Co-Director Terry Hoffman.

## Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)

Taylor Klocke

Communications and Legislative Specialist

Washington, DC

The Community Transportation Association of America’s (CTAA) [annual EXPO](#) (taking place this year in Louisville, Kentucky from May 10<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>) is less than three months away, where they will be hosting a wide range of new events, intensives and more workshop blocks than ever before. As North and South Dakotans, we are positive this conference, created with an emphasis on rural and tribal transit topics, is an event you won’t want to miss!

### [Events](#)

EXPO is more than workshops and intensives. CTAA will be offering several events and general sessions planned to maximize networking. EXPO ’22 registration includes access to a number of signature events during the conference that no attendee will want to miss, such as our brand new Young Professionals Networking Reception, Women in Transit Happy Hour and the annual State of the Association Reception.

### [Intensives](#)

There is an intensive for everyone at this year’s conference. On Thursday, CTAA will be offering intensives such as *How to Be an Effective Presenter*, *Building and Retaining a Sustainable Driver Workforce*. On Friday, the Association will be offering the first-ever *Rural and Tribal Transit Manager Summit* - a full-day, wide-ranging summit for rural and tribal transit leaders around the country to dive into today’s most pressing and important topics.

### [Workshops](#)

There will be a total of **eleven** workshop blocks – more than ever before! Topics covered range from zero-emission vehicles to innovative advertising programs and current CDL training programs.

### [Rodeo](#)

This exciting event draws mini-van and body-on-chassis drivers from around the country to compete for top scores on courses that tests skills on every level of the drivers’ abilities, with a primary focus on safe operations and passenger sensitivity.

We also have opportunities to participate in the rodeo even if you aren’t a driver! Help us out by volunteering as a judge for the various scoring elements around the competition site on Saturday, May 14.

[Register for CTAA’s EXPO today!](#)

Should you have any questions about these exciting opportunities, don’t hesitate to reach out to CTAA’s Events team at [events@ctaa.org](mailto:events@ctaa.org). We’ll see you soon in Louisville!

## Bis-Man Transit Fare Payment Evolves

Deidre Hughes, Executive Director

### Bis-Man Transit

Bis-Man Transit has spent the past few years seeking innovative ways for paratransit and fixed-route riders to purchase bus passes. Token Transit was launched by Bis-Man Transit in 2019, offering CAT Bus riders the option to pay for fixed-route bus passes with their smartphone. Bus passes can also be purchased by friends, family, or other agencies and sent virtually via text message. This has offered more flexibility for passengers and eliminated the need to carry cash for purchasing bus passes onboard.

After seeing the success of alternative payment options for fixed-route riders, Bis-Man Transit began investigating possible solutions for paratransit and demand response riders. Utilizing Ecolane dispatching software, staff was able to launch a "diminishing balance" option for the riders. Funds can be added through the company website, over the phone with a credit or debit card, or in-person with cash, credit, or debit card. Diminishing balance eliminates the need for elderly and disabled passengers to carry exact change or purchase punch cards to pay for their ride.

For customers who are not interested in opting into the diminishing balance program, Bis-Man Transit has also implemented online ticket purchasing options for both modes of transportation. Charge account customers and agencies are encouraged to pay open invoices through the platform, as well.

"We have had excellent feedback from riders and guardians who have used the new diminishing balance feature and the online payment option. It really seems to help eliminate some riders' anxiety caused by having to keep track of physical tickets. The change has also cut down on staff time which is an added bonus for us", states Deidre Hughes

## Trying Something New

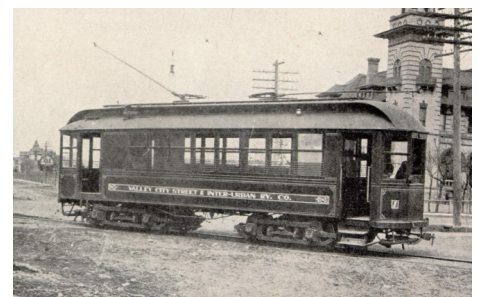
Pat Hansen

### South Central Adult Service Council

As I am sure many of you are aware, obtaining new vehicles has become nearly impossible this past year. South Central has had 14 vehicles on back-order for over a year. Rod and I started talking about last year's DTA Conference and the Hometown Trolley vender that was in attendance. We had a discussion with Hometown at the time about how long it would take to get a Trolley and questioned their willingness to get on the State Bid.

We were becoming desperate and contacted Becky at the NDDOT and asked if it would be possible to purchase a trolley for use in Valley City. Becky told us that if the vender was willing to provide the paperwork to get it on the State Bid that they could approve us purchasing one. It took several weeks to complete the process, but it was worth the wait!

We have a trolley on order and hope to have in the next 4-6 weeks. It is being built as I write this. We were interested operating the trolley in Valley City because it is a part of Valley City's history. The picture in this article is of a trolley that ran in Valley City in the late 1800s



and the other picture is of our new trolley.



The staff and board members were also excited about doing something different. We are hopeful that the trolley might attract some of the college students and younger members of the community to use public transit. It has been an ongoing issue as many of the younger generation consider our vehicles “Senior” buses, even though they have been PUBLIC transit for many years.

We will do an update on the project when we have the vehicle and are using it!

## **What Does DTA Mean to Me**

Sally Kliniske, Director

### **Pembina County Meals & Transportation**

Membership in DTA is a benefit to any transit agency. Attending the fall conference is a great opportunity to network with other transit providers. The fall conference is a place to gather new ideas. It is also a place to gain advice for problems and challenges that we all face as rural transit providers. It also helps you establish a personal relationship with other providers so you know who to call for advice.

One thing that I have really appreciated about attending the DTA conference is that it gives providers a chance to connect with state DOT staff and get to know them on a personal basis. If you need to call Bismarck with a question or problem, it is easier to do when you actually have a relationship with the person on the other end of the line.

Valuable training opportunities are available at the conference. The training might not always seem relevant to our small rural agency, but we will have the knowledge if the need arises.

The training available to drivers before, during and after the Rodeo is also very valuable. Especially the Qstraint training that is usually held the night before the Rodeo. Even the best drivers can benefit from a refresher course on how to properly secure wheelchairs. The Rodeo and banquet also give drivers a chance to network with other drivers from across both states.

The Trade Show is a great place to gather new ideas. This has been extremely helpful when we have been in the market for new vehicles.

The newsletter helps us stay connected with the other agencies in both states and keeps us up-to-date as to what is going on.

If there was a way to send all of my dispatchers and drivers to the whole conference, I would. However, somebody has to stay home and work.

## **2022 DTA Membership Form**

Jacque Senger

DTA Executive Director



There are still a handful of transit agencies who have not renewed their 2022 DTA Membership Forms.

Remember....working together can accomplish much success