



TRANSIT TIDBITS

Issue 110

February 2021

Protective Panel

Gayle Kludt, Executive Director
People’s Transit - Huron, SD

Several of the larger transport buses utilized by People’s Transit received a safety upgrade on Thursday.

According to Gayle Kludt, People’s Transit’s executive director, five of the buses were outfitted with safety barriers that are located between the bus driver and passengers, but between the passengers as well. “We did all five of the buses that we utilized in town right now,” Kludt said. “This is in addition to the barrier shields that were installed in our mini-vans.”

Kludt said that the biggest benefit of the barriers installed Thursday is that they are adaptable and adjustable to other vehicles.

“COVID really caused us to look at things differently,” Kludt said. “When we received the funding for protective barriers, getting barriers that would be able to be used in any different vehicle we would get is a tremendous benefit.”

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People's Transit Executive Director Gayle Kludt poses behind a protective panel around the driver's area.

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Kludt noted that the barriers would also be beneficial during regular cold and flu season, as the drivers are separated from the passengers getting on the bus and the passengers are protected from casual contact when seated as well.

“When the CARES funding for transit companies became available, we wanted to do everything we could to help protect our passengers and drivers,” Kludt said.

In addition to the Plexiglass barriers, Kludt said that People's Transit has purchased a pair of electrostatic sprayers that drivers use at the end of their shift. “The driver sprays down the interior of the bus with the disinfectant, then when he or she comes in in the morning, it is ready to go. During the day, of course, they are continually wiping down surfaces as well.”

Training Update

Linda Freeman (701) 848-6480

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The Watertown classes went very well. I again need to send out a huge “Thank You” to Tom from Aberdeen and Adam & Andy from Pierre for doing yet another great job at the Watertown classes! Also a big “Thanks” to Terry and Kathy for all you did to make the Watertown Class possible. **Thank You!**

We are working on setting up PASS, PASS Recertification and Defensive Driving classes at Devils Lake as soon as we can get dates that will work for everyone involved. Please watch the web site for information and registration. I will get it posted as soon as we are able to lock things down.

IMPORTANT: Again, if you would like to host a class in the coming months, please send me some possible dates you would be interested in having one.

Keep up the great work you all do so well!

University Biology Department

Rod Grafiing, Transit Coordinator
South Central Adult Services - Valley City, ND

In October of 2020, Professor Hilde Van Gijssel of Valley City State University asked if South Central Transit would like to take part in a project for her Biology 340 class. Hilde, as she prefers to be referenced, is also a part time taxi driver at South Central.

You might be wondering what kind of project a university biology department would want a transit agency to participate in, and so did we. As it turned out, there were no lab rats, dissections or rhesus monkeys involved. Instead, Professor Van Gijssel offered our agency the chance to conduct a survey on public transit in our community.

She informed us that her students were required to submit a project utilizing research methods, question formulation, data analysis and presentation of results. All of these steps are important in the field of healthcare. We worked with students to formulate questions that would produce the insights and answers that we were looking for.

The students then conducted the survey over a 3 week period. It reached over 1000 people via websites, social media and email lists. Just a few sample questions from the survey: Is there a stigma associated with using public transit? Has the COVID 19 pandemic impacted your use of public transit? Would you like to see transit hours extended? Would you consider using fixed route transit service if it were available? Would you consider using a scheduled rideshare transit service if you work out of town? Would you use public transit if scheduled stops were available on campus?

Each question in the survey had a subset of questions and responses that resulted in more refined data. The study was completed in early December and presented to us in the classroom on December 16, 2020. We were also given the raw data from the project which has given us much needed insight to our community's perception of South Central Transit, our current system of operation and possible changes we may need to make in the future.

What a great opportunity this was to work with Hilde and her students. We would like to thank everyone at VCSU who helped make this project happen.



Minot Donates Rare Bus to Wisconsin Museum

Brian Horinka, Transit Director
Minot City Transit - Minot, ND

The City of Minot owns four 1977 AM General Metropolitan transit buses - the only four known to still be in operational condition.

To longtime Minot residents, the green/white/blue City of Minot transit buses were a familiar sight in our community for more than two decades.

To bus enthusiasts and historians, those popular buses are a sought-after piece of transit history. And now, following a decision by the Minot City Council on Dec. 7, one of Minot's buses will be getting a new home: the Midwest Bus Museum in Bangor, Wisconsin.

"They contacted us. The museum was looking for different buses to shine some light on transit from the Midwest, and they wanted to know if they could get their hands on one of ours for their museum," said Brian Horinka, vehicle maintenance and transit superintendent for the City of Minot. "It'll be interesting for Minot to have a piece of our history in this museum." The AM General Metropolitan transit bus is something of a rarity in the world of mass transit history. It had a short manufacturing run from 1974-79, and only 5,212 of them were built. Only four of the buses are known to still be operational; The City of Minot owns all four of them.

"There are others that are on static display, but we have the last four of them that are operational," said Horinka. "One of ours is insured, licensed, and is occasionally used, like during Norsk Hostfest. It's a big bus and it carries a lot of people in a hurry. But it's kind of a rough ride and it doesn't have power steering."

Minot's other three AM General Metropolitan buses are no longer used, Horinka said. One of those three will be donated to the museum, so the decision won't have any impact on Minot's fleet of transit vehicles.

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Museum

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Horinka said the AM General Metropolitan model was a redesign of a popular Canadian bus. The Canadian company was unable to ship its vehicles into the United States at the time, so the AM General company produced its version, which became popular across the country, Horinka said, including in Minot.

Through the years, Horinka said he's had visitors from Canada, New York, and other locations stop in Minot just to see the vehicles. "We got them new in 1977 or 1978, I would guess. When I started at the City in 2004, we were still using two of them every day," he said. "It will be kind of a neat thing to have Minot represented like this."

Horinka said representatives from the museum will be in Minot on December 11th to look at the buses.

Safety and Efficiency Planning Report

Adam Sharkey, Safety Manager/Coordinator of Training
River Cities Public Transit - Pierre, SD

River Cities Public Transit (RCPT) recently finished our Safety and Efficiency Planning Report in 2020. We started this journey in Kearney, Nebraska visiting RYDE TRANSIT in 2018 and ended our journey in Austin, Texas visiting Capital Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) in 2020. This project was not to address fear and misunderstandings in transit, it was to discover best practices and their benefits in operating a transit agency.

In our travels to Arrowhead Transit in Gilbert, MN we met with Larry Rodgers in Advertising and Marketing. He showed us some commercials he had made that Arrowhead Transit airs on television, advertisements on billboards and other social media advertising he uses in Minnesota. Seeing this RCPT realized that one of our biggest weakness is getting our story out and decided to search for a Media & Communications employee.

Starting in July 2020, we hired Jess Marlow for our newly created Marketing & Communications Coordinator. Jess moved to South Dakota from Louisiana to relocate his mom near her hometown of Highmore, South Dakota.



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Jess has spent most of his career in the marketing and advertising fields. He has worked as the Director of Sales and Marketing for SMG Worldwide, the largest public venue management company in the world. His duties included promoting concert and entertainment events at the CenturyTel Center and the Superdome in Louisiana. He has worked with the largest concert promoters in the country including AEG, Live Nation, and Feld Entertainment promoting hundreds of music, sporting and entertainment acts at these SMG managed venues.



In addition, Jess served as the Director of Sales and Marketing for Starwood Hotels and Resorts in Louisiana and in Denver, Colorado. He understands how Convention and Visitor Bureaus and the hospitality industry must partner together to build a destination that people want to visit and spend their tourism dollars. His experience has taught him that great partnerships are necessary for success regardless of the industry you are in.

Jess brought his experience to RCPT in an effort to tell our story to the communities we serve. Since joining our team, Jess launched several radio, print and social media campaigns to build awareness among qualified veterans of the Highly Rural Transportation Grant. As veteran of the U.S. Army, getting South Dakota vets to their medical appointments is especially important to him.

He created and implemented a new initiative for RCPT. It is called the ***Design a Bus*** contest for area elementary students to come up with a safety design for a new bus in our fleet. The winners were awarded with money and gift cards as well as having their designs placed on the bus for a year. The contest ran in four elementary schools and was supported by radio ads to drive interest. The campaign was a huge hit and built tremendous goodwill in the Pierre / Ft. Pierre communities.

So far this addition to RCPT has been a major success, and not our only one. We have implemented many new safety and training precautions as well as adding a few new positions to help RCPT grow far into the future.

DTA's Fall Conference/Rodeo Jacque Senger, DTA Executive Director

REMINDER ----The Fall Conference/Rodeo is scheduled for September 17th through the 21st, 2021 in Fargo, ND. Registration forms will be on the website when completed. We are holding our conference at the Delta Marriott Hotel, phone number is 701-277-9000.

New Faces of Transit

South Dakota Department of Transportation

The South Dakota Department of Transportation has added a few new members to their team. Here is a quick little tidbit of information about the new staff:

Jennifer Boehm

I am the latest addition to the State of South Dakota Transit Office in Pierre, SD. After graduating from Boise State University in Idaho with a bachelor's degree in General Business Management, I moved to Pierre, SD in 1998 and began working for the SDDOT.

I have been with the Office of Aeronautics for the past 22 years where I worked with the FAA and all public airport sponsors throughout the state. I have experience in doing project reimbursements, coordinating conferences, working with large databases, and tracking details for reports.

I have 2 grown children and a dog who has trained me very well to be at her beck and call.

Rich Leners

I joined the Transit Section of the South Dakota Department of Transportation in November 2020 after briefly working as a consultant on facility study in Brookings.

Prior to becoming a consultant, I worked for 16 years at a small urban transit agency in Iowa where I led fleet and facility maintenance. While at the agency, I was responsible for capital planning, construction projects, and procurement.

My favorite part of the new job at SDDOT is being involved with transit construction projects in South Dakota.

Monte Meier

I have been working for the SD DOT since March of 2019, spending the first year and half as an Accountant in the Finance Department before coming to work in the Transit Office in September of 2020.

Before coming to work for the State, I was employed by River Cities Public Transit for 9 years, starting in dispatch and ending as the Administrative Assistant. I am working towards my Business Administration Degree through Northern State.

I am married with 3 children and we also have 3 dogs, 1 cat and a hamster.

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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 February 2021

ONE SMALL
positive thought
in the morning
can change your
WHOLE DAY



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