



# Transit Tidbits

Issue

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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL 2021

Inside this issue:

*You will never have this day again, so make it count.*

## TRAINING UPDATE

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See below for classes that are set up. PASS, PASS Recertification, and the Defensive Driving classes are all new.

Devils Lake, ND--May 7 & 8, 2021:

PASS-Friday, May 7 from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm and Saturday, May 8 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING-Friday, May 7 from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

PASS RECERTIFICATION-Saturday, May 8 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

### Training Update Continued from page 1

Registration Deadline for classes is April 19. All classes will be held at the Devils Lake Senior Center 202 4th Ave. NE in Devils Lake.

A block of rooms at state rates has been set up under the name Dakota Transit Assn. for the nights of May 6 and May 7, 2021 at the Fireside Inn & Suites--215 Hwy 2 East. You will need to call 701-662-6760 before April 30th to make your reservations under the block.

Dickinson, ND - October 8 & 9, 2021

PASS-Friday, October 8th from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm and Saturday, May 8 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING-Friday, October 8th from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

PASS RECERTIFICATION-Saturday, October 9th from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

Registration Deadline for classes is September 27th. All classes will be held at

Dickinson Public Transit - 361 26th Street East in Dickinson.

A block of rooms at state rates has been set up under the name Dakota Transit Assn. for the nights of October 7 & 8, 2021 at the Dickinson Comfort Inn. Call 701-264-7300 by September 20th to make reservations under the block.

Bowman, ND: We are working on setting up classes in Bowman on June 21st and 22nd, 2021. More information will follow in next tidbit.

**IMPORTANT:** Please contact me via phone or email if you would like to host a class during 2021. Thank You!

As usual, keep up the great work you all do so well!

## SPRING VIRTUAL MEETING

Jacque Senger, DTA Executive Director

The Dakota Transit Association Board of Director's has set up a Spring Virtual Meeting for April 22, 2021 at 1:00 CST. Scott Bogren, Executive Director, CTAA, will be the host for our meeting. This meeting will last approximately 90 minutes. The Topic is "Covid Recovery". Following is a brief synopsis of the topic.

- The three phases of transit in the pandemic
  - \*Survival
  - \*The Holding Pattern
  - \*The New Normal
- Learning/Discussing what is temporary and what is permanent.
- The Federal response (\$\$+Flexibility)
- The Vaccination issue
  - \*Increasing access to vaccine sites
  - \*Transit employees and the vaccine
- The New Normal and Transit in the Dakotas

If anyone has specific questions for Scott, please email him directly, [bogren@ctaa.org](mailto:bogren@ctaa.org), a week prior to the meeting.



Eddy County Transportation drivers Norris Kjos, Dennis Koenig and Laurice Swenson. These 3 gentlemen were recognized by the Chamber of Commerce for their quality service to the county's residents.

## Senior Meals & Services Devils Lake, ND

Pat Hejlik, Transportation Director

Written by

Amy Wobbema

The New Rockford Transcript

Their behind-the-wheel skill is top notch, and their front-door service is much appreciated. The March Employees of the Month are none other than the three men who drive for Eddy County Transportation. Laurice Swenson, Norris Kjos and Dennis Koenig were honored by the New Rockford Area Chamber of Commerce on Wednesday.

Public transit is an essential service, and residents are grateful to have Eddy County Transportation fulfilling the needs of residents in New Rockford and Sheyenne.

Rows of bus passes adorned the desk at the New Rockford Senior Center that serves as the

home base and command central for all three drivers. Fun fact: none of them were drivers in their professional lives. When asked how they came to be bus drivers, Koenig quipped, "I only joined because these two talked me into it." "I got bored being retired, and Norris, he just didn't know better," Swenson joked.

All joking aside, they all enjoy their time at the wheel, as it affords them the opportunity to see their friends and neighbors, while making sure they get them to their appointments on time and complete their shopping at their leisure.

Seated at his desk, Swenson reviewed his pen-and-paper log, counting 61 potential riders for Wednesday alone. He said the public transit averages 55-60 rides a day on the in-town bus, for which he and Kjos split duties. Koenig primarily drives the van designated for out-of-town trips, and averages three or four trips a week. Residents of New Rockford and Sheyenne can travel to and from Devils Lake or Carrington using the service.

Eddy County Transportation is available weekdays from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., offering rides to residents of all ages and abilities, with wheelchair accessible vehicles and front-door service. In fact, the county's smallest residents are among the biggest users of the public transit system. Kjos said he has had as many as 21 kids to pick up at one time. With two sessions of preschool during the day, and elementary students to pick up before and after school, they make 10 trips to and from the New Rockford school and East Central (where the preschool program is currently held) every day.

Pandemic precautions have affected their operations as well, even though the bus has capacity for 13 riders, it is now limited to just seven riders at a time. The capacity restrictions have caused drivers to make nearly twice as many trips to the school as they did in the past, as there are often more than seven students riding. As a result, the drivers came up with a system that splits the community into two routes, one each traveling east and west of the BNSF railroad tracks to homes

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and daycares. After school, they take one route at a time, returning for others, after the first riders are taken home. Riders are required to always wear masks.

Riders can purchase a bus pass for \$20, which is good for 20 rides on the transit bus as needed. And, gone are the days of keeping that pass in your pocket or purse. The drivers manage the passes as part of their end-of-day paperwork duties. They make note of who is riding as they board the bus, and then at the end of the day, they mark the passes of each rider who had been on board that day. When a rider's pass has about four to five rides remaining, they call to inform them that they need to purchase another pass.

All three of the drivers are North Dakota natives, but that's about the only place where their professional paths crossed, before becoming co-workers at Eddy County Transportation.

Swenson was born and raised in Devils Lake. He served in the U.S. Navy during the Vietnam War, where he was involved with the search and rescue of helicopter pilots that had been shot down. He was a helicopter mechanic in Portland, Oregon early in life, then later worked at Nordic Fiberglass in Devils Lake.

Koenig hails from Robinson, where his family farmed. His first job off the farm was at the Cenex in Fessenden. Then, after four years in tooling at aerospace giant, Boeing, in Seattle, Wash., he and his wife Carol returned to North Dakota, where they operated service stations in three different locations in New Rockford. Most recently, they operated Pioneer Auto in partnership with David Jenrich for 30 years, before retiring in 2011.

Kjos is a New Rockford native. He worked in maintenance at the New Rockford school for 26 years, then made a switch to Erickson Implement in Carrington for a time. For the past six years, he has managed the Carrington bowling alley.

They were nominated by Sharon Young, who said she appreciates that she can count on them to pick her up at her front door and drop her off at her destination.

The service is available to anyone who needs it. To schedule a ride with Eddy County Transportation, call (701) 302-0324.

Check our website for more information at [www.seniormeansandservices.com](http://www.seniormeansandservices.com) or Eddy County Transportation - Devils Lake Transit and like us on Facebook.

## Erin Humphrey Assistant Executive Director for Elder Care and Dickinson Public Transit Dickinson, ND

Hello! Greetings from Dickinson, ND.

I recently joined the Dakota Transit Association (DTA) as a board member. I am the Assistant Executive Director for Elder Care and Dickinson Public Transit in Dickinson, ND and have been with the agency for over 8 years. I want to share with you a little bit of my experience as a board member. I was hesitant about becoming a board member for a long time, as I did not understand the positive impact being a board member could have on Dickinson Public Transit and me. I am immensely proud and thankful to serve as a board member and have had a wonderful experience so far! The experience has been interesting, fun and informative. I have already learned so much from Jacque and the other board members. I would encourage anyone interested in becoming a board member to give it a shot! You will learn so much and become more skilled in your position!

# **SPEARFISH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT BOARD MET WITH SENATOR JOHN THUNE**

**Prairie Hills Transit  
Barb Cline, Executive Director**



**Senator John Thune**

Last week the Spearfish Economic Development Board had an opportunity to meet with Senator John Thune in Spearfish. I am currently the past chair of SEDC. Senator Thune is a member of the Senate Transportation Committee. On behalf of Prairie Hills Transit and as the President of the Community Transportation Association of America I thanked the Senator for the Federal Assistance transit agencies received through the CARES Act. This funding came at a time when transit systems were virtually shut down and worried about how to keep/ retain staff and pay their bills. It enabled us to buy PPE equipment such as masks, chemical sanitizer, sprayer to disinfect and plexiglass dividers for the safety of drivers and passenger. This was not a political statement, but rather one of gratefulness for the recognition that transportation plays in every community. Our essential workers kept jobs and kept transportation available to people who may not have had any other choice. I appreciated the opportunity to express my appreciation personally.

Thursday, April 8, I participated in 7 of the 41 calls that CTAA scheduled with Congressional staffers to discuss the needs of transit systems across the nation. We discussed FAST Act reauthorization priorities, local share flexibility, the status quo of CDL licensures for drivers, and N-CATT (National Center for Applied Transit Technology). We hope that we can make permanent the Section 5311 and 5310 programmatic deferrals from FTA's public transportation safety requirements of Safety. And what makes more sense than Charter service restriction only apply within urbanized areas? There are so many things that could potentially benefit us it is hard to pick the most important. CTAA staff and Board of Directors will discuss rural, small city, specialized and NEMT operators needs with these Congressional staff members.

I believe the overall discussion continues to solidify ongoing benefits for CTAA members. Look forward to seeing a report from Scott Bogren in the near future once the debrief of all our meetings has been compiled.