



TRANSIT TIDBITS

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Transit Pioneer Carol Seurer

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Watertown-Sisseton, Inc. - Watertown, SD

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Consolidating forces with the original Community Transit has been a blessing on many fronts, including giving me the opportunity to become better acquainted with former director and transit pioneer Carol Seurer.

When I first came to the transit world, I was told of the various leaders in the industry and of their accomplishments. Seurer’s name was always at the forefront of those discussions.

From meager beginnings to managing one of the most successful transit programs in South Dakota, the Sisseton native’s main objective was to provide safe and affordable transportation for as many people as she could reach.

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The biggest challenges we had then are the same facing transit directors today and that's funding," said Seurer. "There was little funding if any funding at that time."

Equipment was at a premium in the early days of transit and being innovative was a must for operators. Needing a way to transport non-ambulatory riders basically meant inventing her own lift system. No problem.

"We went to a scrap yard, found some metal and welded it together and installed a pulley system to create a lift," she said. "You had to work with what you had, and we did."



The South Dakota Department of Transportation eventually got involved and by the early 80's public transit was receiving roughly one-half million dollars to fund projects. Seurer's one-vehicle operation in Roberts County had expanded to include Marshall and Day counties and was known as Tri-County Transit.

By the mid-80's she was providing rides in Faulk, Edmunds and McPherson counties. Community Transit was borne in 1992 and Grant County and the Lennox operation in Lincoln County joined the party.

The early days of transit were predominantly for senior citizens, but as the DOT became more involved financially, the push to make transit truly public became a main focus. Prior to the influx of those funds, transportation programs struggled to stay afloat financially.

"There were times we used donations for gas money," said Seurer. "We just didn't have the resources then. Our riders were just happy to have the service and they policed each other."

Realizing the need for financial support for their product, Seurer and other providers formed two groups to assist with the promotion of transit and to hopefully educate the public as well as he lawmakers in Pierre and their local districts on the virtues of public transit.

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The Dakota Transit Association was officially formed in South Dakota in 1984 and North Dakota would join forces a couple years later. The mission of the DTA was to promote and support public and specialized transportation programs in the Dakotas with a vision of providing unified leadership in an everchanging transportation environment.

The plan emphasized training, legislative advocacy, education of the public, funding, promoting coordination national involvement and recognition of member agencies, their staff and transit supporters.

“There was very little training back then,” said Seurer. “I developed a guide on securement of passengers not knowing all of the guidelines. I was proud of the fact mine was very close to the PASS training manual when it was published.”

Transit Directors also organized the South Dakota Transit Providers Association in the spirit of accomplishing many of the same goals as the DTA. Seurer played a major role in this group. “We spent many hours talking transit to lawmakers in Pierre day and night, it didn’t matter,” said Seurer.

Seurer may be retired, but she still has her eye on the transit world and the current issues. In her estimation, the DTA and the SDTPA need to be more involved at the state and legislative levels. She was quick to plug the DOT and staff for their contributions during her time in transit.

“We always had a wonderful working relationship with the state, we were a team,” said Seurer. “I wish there would be more of that today.”

The consolidation of many transit programs in the state is something Seurer believes was on the horizon for many years and is a positive move for those involved. Leaders need to have the ability to work for a common goal to make it successful.

“Consolidation will allow public transportation to survive,” said Seurer.

Seurer said she is proud of her life’s work and to have had an influence on the DTA and transit in its infancy stage.

“I really enjoyed my life in public transit, it was my baby and I want to see it succeed,” said Seurer.

Training Update

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Our Devils Lake class went very well. A big thanks to Pat Hejlik for everything and to Rod Grafing for helping with the training! We had a great group of trainees. Below are a couple of photos.

We are planning to hold a class at Bowman. The tentative dates are June 21st and 22nd. Classes to be offered are PASS, PASS Recertification, and Defensive Driving. You may send an email to Linda to register for these classes.

We have classes set up in Dickinson for October 8th and 9th as follows:

PASS: Friday, October 8 from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm and

Saturday, October 9 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

DEFENSIVE DRIVING: October 8 from 2:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

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

Registration deadline for all classes is September 27th. All classes to be held at Dickinson Public Transit-361 26th St. 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.



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

Keep in mind that your PASS certifications are now only good for two years rather than three years.



Thanks to all for all you do for others!

Remodel Complete/Well Sort Of

Terry Hoffman, Co-Director
Community Transit of Watertown-Sisseton, Inc. - Watertown, SD

After essentially a three-year wait, the remodeling of the upstairs at the Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc. office in Watertown is complete.

Planning for this project began in 2018, but delays pushed back the beginning of construction to march of this year. Two months later, I am typing this article from the quiet confines of my new second floor office.

When our current facility was constructed in 2006, the upper level was left unfinished and was basically a large storage unit with no heating or cooling system and no insulation. Translated, if you did want to utilize the space for any activity, it had to be in the spring before the weather heated up or in the fall before the cold of winter set in. Eventually the space became a collection point for many items, largely items we would eventually discard.

Construction was slated to begin in the fall of 2020, after receiving final approval from the FTA. The only stipulation – and a major one – was we needed to incorporate an elevator. The project obviously came to a screeching halt while plans were altered to include the mechanism into the construction plan. These changes also meant the entire process of issuing an RFP and securing bids from interested contractors had to be revisited. In the end, the same contractor was awarded the bid and beginning of the project was pushed back to the beginning of 2021. As the new year approached, the schedule was pushed back to March.



Part of the controlled chaos in our former office environment was the lack of privacy and the noise levels generated by the constant ringing of phones, drivers clocking in and out, walk-in customers at the front counter, and dispatchers trying in vain to talk over the other voices in the room. The administration team, while in another room, was still part of this mix. Confidentiality was not an issue – there was none.

The new setup on the second floor allows for four individual offices, a conference room, kitchen-break area and a restroom.

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Remodel

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We also have built in two large closets for storage and a comfortably wide hallway where we have placed chairs and tables for individuals waiting to speak with members of the admin team.

Like any construction project, little quirks have developed, but were quickly dealt with. The most notable was the temporary haunting of the elevator. As I sat in the dispatch room discussing the day with the team, the elevator door opened on its own, waited a few seconds and closed again. Last week, the phone line in the elevator began ringing at approximately the same on three consecutive days. Weird, but just a minor glitch and dealt with quickly by contractors.

The crews who performed the work were exceptional in my mind and very easy to work with. There were very few disruptions in our activity due to their work. We did have to park a few vehicles outside and traffic flow through our lot was sometimes an obstacle course, but always manageable. The noise and dust generated were a nuisance we were more than happy to deal with as long as the outcome was kept in mind.

With the upstairs renovated, we will now be opening up the back room on the ground floor to the drivers providing them with a much-needed space to congregate at the beginning and end of their shifts. This area currently has a sink and refrigerator, the time clock, a TV monitor and computers for training purposes and chairs to lounge in.

We have received funds from the FTA to construct our Call-Dispatch Center that will begin as soon as we make our way through the necessary pre-construction processes. This phase will separate the dispatch staff from the receptionists, the walk-in traffic and the drivers, creating a more inviting workspace for those employees.



Dakota Transit Association Fall Conference

Jacque Senger, DTA Executive Director

The Board of Directors' have been working diligently to put the Fall Conference together.

We are still working with Covid issues; therefore, we are still waiting to finalize our agenda.

The list below are items you will want to pay attention to.....

- The Marriott Delta Hotel, Fargo, ND 1635 42nd Street SW, Fargo, ND 58103 is hosting our conference.
- Our dates are September 18th through the 21st.
- As soon as we can finalize our agenda, the information will be place on the website. I will send a mass e-mail out to the general membership to inform everyone the information is online.
- Our Registration Forms will go online the same time as the agenda. This year there will be a link you will want to register under. There will be a phone number for you to use for registration, however the Marriott has asked everyone, if possible, to use the link.
- Due to employee shortage at the Marriott, if their desk person is busy when you call, your call will automatically be rerouted to the corporate phone. If you choose to phone in, you could be put on hold for 20 plus minutes.



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 May 2021

Believe you can and you're halfway there!



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