



TRANSIT TIDBITS

Issue 118

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What DTA Means to Me Brenda Schweitzer, Executive Director BATA - Brookings, SD

There is so much ‘industry lingo’ out here – and it took me quite a while to figure it all out, especially the acronyms of programs available: FTA, FDA, RTAP, DOT, CTAA, APTA, DTA, SWATA, etc. I knew they were all significant, I just had to figure out where they fit into this transit program. More importantly, how can I use these organizations to benefit my program?

It was my task to learn and understand these programs. While this transit program comes with a ‘manual’, there is so much more to it. Time, experience, being involved, asking questions; that’s what it takes to see how these resources help us. The higher the level in the government chain, the more complicated the programs are to navigate. Simple language would help; my opinion!

Dakota Transit Association is our link to CTAA (Community Transit Association of America), being the regional transportation connection. Through DTA we should be able to have a perspective on what is going on nationally. It’s our responsibility to know this, yet not always our ability to obtain all that is needed.

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DTA

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Having the collaboration, connections, networking, and friendships that have been gained is the true benefit and value of belonging to DTA for me. Being involved is key.

Serving on the DTA Board of Directors for many years has taught me so much. Wanting to be a part of something larger than our program to improve what we have is a win/win. Like most things in life, “As you give, so shall you receive”. Get involved, offer your time, talent, and passion to DTA – we all benefit!



2021 National Rural Transit Assistance Program

Karrie Mikkelsen, Director
Cavalier County Transit - Langdon, ND

Scott Zadakis eLearning Project Manager National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) and Robin Phillips National RTAP Executive Director hosted a session on “National RTAP Updates” at the DTA Convention in Fargo, ND. National RTAP provides free training and technical assistance products and services to rural and tribal transit operators, state DOTS and partner organizations.

Scott gave an overview on the RTAP eLearning program and newly released training courses. New training coming soon will be Dispatching and Scheduling, Delivering Excellent Customer Service in Rural Transit, and TACL Training. Scott also gave a demonstration on how to get set-up in eLearning as a Team and strongly encourages all transit agencies to sign up this way. Some of RTAP’s most popular training modules are Substance Abuse Awareness Training, 2 the Point Training including ADA, Bloodborne Pathogens, Customer Service, Defensive Driving, Distracted Driving, and Drugs & Alcohol, Safety Training and Rural Transit (START), and Technical Briefs pertaining to Wheelchair Securement, Grant Writing, and FTA’s Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program.

For more information on eLearning contact Scott Zadakis at 781-404-5036 or email Scott at szadakis@nationalrtap.org. Visit www.nationalrtap.org to register for upcoming events and to view their full Calendar. RTAP also recommends subscribing to their biweekly eNews. All RTAP webinars are archived on their website. Training Modules and Technical Briefs can be downloaded from the Resource Library at nationalrtap.org.

Take advantage of all the “FREE” training RTAP has to offer.

Passenger with Disabilities Through Greater Sensitivity

Barb Cline, Executive Director
Prairie Hills Transit - Spearfish, SD

Civil Rights and an understanding of the ADA are understandably some of the most difficult regulations transit agencies deal with on a regular basis.

On October 18-19 agencies from South Dakota and a member of the NDDOT met at Prairie Hills Transit in Spearfish to learn from John Cleveland, an expert in Civil Rights.

Discussion ranged from the meaning of Disability to the phrase major life activities. People with disabilities want independence too. Significant time was spent learning and discussing ADA Title II Nondiscrimination, the basics of communication and how assumption can result in barriers to accessibility.



The class learned more about people who use wheelchairs, who are blind or visually impaired, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and those with speech, intellectual or hidden disabilities. There was a significant amount of information disseminated regarding the DOT Final Rule change and the people who use mobility devices and how the requirements affect the transit agency. Procedure for boarding using lifts or ramps, keeping vehicle lift operable and the role PCAs and passenger assistance play.

The lessons learned in this class came from printed materials, lecture, role play and exercise tests. I think it is fair to say that the discussion was lively and free flowing and that all of us left this class with a clearer respect for compliance of the rulings and the role public transit plays in the lives of persons with disabilities. I think it is also fair to say that Donald Sharkey won the "BEST PERFORMER" award for his role of the disruptive and unruly passenger.

Prairie Hills Transit would like to thank everyone who attended. It was informative, fun filled with lots of laughter, and a great way to make two days of an extremely important subject go quickly.

Consolidation - A Success Story

Terry Hoffman, Co-Director

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

Consolidating forces to save dollars and make the most of available resources has been the driving force behind this activity in the South Dakota public transportation system.

Has the movement been a success? According to South Dakota Department of Transportation Air, Rail and Transportation Manager Jack Dokken consolidation has been a major success in the state.

“The idea behind the process is to save federal dollars and utilize your resources in the most efficient manner and increase opportunities for riders,” said Dokken. “These people at the table have been successful in making this happen.”

Dokken was a part of the six-person panel discussing transit consolidation on Monday afternoon at the 2021 Dakota Transit Annual Fall Conference. Ron Baumgart (River Cities Public Transit), Barb Cline (Prairie Hills Transit), Pat Hansen (South Central Adult Services) and Terry Hoffman and Kathy Holman (Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc.) joined Dokken to discuss the details – positive and negative – of combining forces in the transit world. Community Transit Association of America Executive Director Scott Bogren was moderator for the panel.

“Consolidation has been an adventure with ups and downs, but in the end, we made the right decision,” said Kathy Holman, Co-Director of CTWSI. “We knew there would be challenges and tough days, but the outcome has been what we expected. We have saved the feds a lot of dollars and we have been able to enhance our service with the resources and coordination in our system.”

CTWSI serves 15 counties and has vehicles in a dozen of those locations. The original Community Transit, Watertown Area Transit, Groton Community Transit and Spink County Transit joined forces to create CTWSI in 2019. Their consolidation was borne from the push by the Federal Transportation Administration and the SDDOT.

“When this first was presented to us, we laughed it off, but we also saw the handwriting on the wall,” said Holman. “We all knew we could work together and so we became pro-active and jumped in.”

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Success

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The others at the table recanted similar yet different tales of consolidation with their projects. Baumgart and Cline provide transportation for the western and central sections of South Dakota, but their acquisitions were more by need than design. Smaller transit projects in those areas eventually needed to fall under the guidance of the larger operations. The same was true of South Central Adult Services located in Valley City, ND.

The success of the consolidation process in the Dakotas has caught the eye of those watching at the Federal level and those savings realized by the actions are becoming apparent at the local level. Consolidation is definitely a success story.

A Conversation with CTAA Executive Director Scott Bogren

Carleen Schill, Transportation Specialists
Cavalier County Transit - Langdon, ND

These last 18 months has seen challenges for transit and unprecedented spending. Prior to COVID-19 the annual federal budget for transit was about 13 billion dollars. The last 11 months has seen a distribution of \$70 billion. We are also 100% federally funded. Transit has also seen 500 drivers lose their lives to the pandemic.

“I hate politics, I like transportation policy work.” stated Scott Bogren as he broke down how Washington works. Authorization happens every 5 years and is dictated by Congress. Appropriations happen every fiscal year and are regulated by committees. The FAST Act which was set to expire September 30, 2020 was extended to September 30th of this year which gives Congress about a week to get their act together to keep transit moving throughout the country.

Scott went on to explain where things sit right now with the Senate and House versions of the bill. Part of the problem is attaching Budget Reconciliation to the Senate version and the bi-partisan politics that are taking place.

Of the Federal Transportation Administration, construction and maintenance of highways and bridges fall under the umbrella of Environment and Public Works and Public Transit falls under umbrella of Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs. The infrastructure proposal from President Biden decreases the current proposal of \$110 billion to \$38 billion. Bus procurements fall under infrastructure.

CTAA

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CTAA has asked Congress in the FAST Act reauthorization bill to increase the budget by 30% for the first year of the 5-year program and a 2% increase for the remaining 4 years. CTAA has been successful in the fight against CDL requirements of 8 passengers and up. They are also busy with low emission and selling used equipment policies. The hardest part of working with Congress is explaining that “rural transit is not a scaled down version of Chicago Metro” Scott stated.

Looking forward we need to look at our bounce back, what the “new normal” may look like, vaccination policies and what is community supported and driven. Looking at the driver shortage we need to understand what the labor market is doing in our area. Of course the supply chain is wreaking havoc with being able to get parts, vehicles and everyday supplies. We also need to make our decisions based on facts, not on social media. With time we’ll see what we’ve done to make things keep moving.

Scott encouraged everyone to attend the CTAA 2021 EXPO in Richmond, Virginia, November 8-11, where we can share our ideas, and what works and what doesn’t work. CTAA 2022 EXPO will be held in Louisville, Kentucky, May 8-12.

Training Update

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We had a great group of drivers from Valley Senior Services, South Central Public Transit, and Cavalier County Transit at our training in Fargo. Below is a picture of the group. Thanks so much to Paul Grindeland and his staff for making it so convenient for us all. A big thanks to Rod from Valley City for helping to teach the class.



As of now, we have no more classes set up for the 2021 year.

IMPORTANT: Please contact me via phone or email if you would like to host a class during 2021 or 2022. Thank You! Keep in mind that your PASS certifications are now only good for two years rather than three years.

Keep up the great work you all do.

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 November 2021

“Whatever you do, do it well.”



Jacque Senger
DTA Executive Director

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