



TRANSIT TIDBITS
Issue 120
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THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH **JANUARY 2022**

Two things you are in total control of in life are your attitude and your effort.

Executive Director's Notes **Jacque Senger, Executive Director**

Your 2022 DTA Membership forms have been emailed to each of you. I am hopeful we have 100% of the transit agencies in ND and SD renew their memberships.

Your Board of Directors are diligently working to prepare the 2022 DTA Conference in Aberdeen, SD, September 16th through the 20th. Our title for the 2022 Conference is "Making a Difference". We met in October 2021 and welcomed our newest board member, Megan Gould from Rapid City Transit System, Rapid City, SD.

We are in the process of contacting speakers, getting out roadeo grounds secured and all the other items that go along with the conference. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or any of the board members.



As We Say in Transit, **The Only Constant is Change** **Brenda Schweitzer, Director** **Brookings Area Transit Authority**

I have tried to start writing this note many times and struggle with finding the right words. My South Dakota peers are aware that after 22 years in rural transit I am making a move to the 'dark side'; that being in the urban scope of public transportation. I have accepted a position with the city of Sioux Falls as their Transportation Planning Coordinator, starting February 7th. My last day of work with BATA will be January 21st. I am sure I'll learn much more about the position as time goes on, however, it will be an oversight to the program's compliance, budget, grant responsibilities. The many firsthand responsibilities of the rural program will not be on my plate. I will be trained in Trams and submitting the vouchers to FTA Region VIII.

This opportunity presented itself; I did not go looking. I look forward to expanding my understanding of the federal transit program from the urban perspective. Overall, it feels very right, even being further from my grands.

Rural transit and BATA will always be my passion project. I have learned so much in the way of opportunities transit provides to communities, individuals, organizations, etc. This passion and learning could only come through the amazing people that are doing this job in their communities. I consider

each of you my transit family and I say this in all sincerity. We have laughed, cried, rejoiced, and mourned together in work and personal occasions. Rural transit has given me many of my best memories, opportunities, and challenges. There is pride in the work each of us do; my greatest source of pride is in my BATA team and all we have accomplished and the goals that we have set for the future.

I thank you, each of you, first for your gift of friendship, but also in the spirit of being a team to better the lives of those we serve through transportation. I look forward to expanding Sioux Falls' role in DTA and have the opportunity to bring in resources and collaboration to Sioux Falls through many of you. This is not goodbye. It is *thank you*, and please stay in touch.

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Untapped National RTAP
Brenda Schweitzer, Review Board Member
Bookings Area Transit Authority

I remember the early days in transit when you're learning all of the MANY acronyms of our industry; FTA, DOT, FMCSA, NOFO, NEPA, DTA, ADA, CTA, PASS, RTAP, etc.; then there are the funding programs consisting of so many numbers.

When instructed on submitting requests for RTAP, I remember not having a clue what those letters meant. When you think about it, Rural Transit Assistance Program doesn't even clearly define that this is for TRAINING and SUPPORT. This program falls under the NRTAP program – NATIONAL RTAP. One of our *greatest oversights* in rural transit is the true understanding of this amazing resource in training, business building, grant opportunities, peer networking, etc.wow.

In figuring out that I do not know enough about the opportunities offered by NRTAP, I made their website my homepage: www.nationartap.org. I'd suggest you consider doing so and make yourself familiar.

Spring of 2021 I was elected to serve on National RTAP's Review Board. This has been a distinct honor and learning opportunity. The Spring meeting was held virtually, and the Fall 2021 meeting was held in Nashville, TN. The resources in that room (and virtually) were amazing! From DOT's to various transit positions, rural and tribal. What a great concept for NRTAP to get direction from those that understand, use, and need assistance.

From their website on the Review Board:
Much of National RTAP's work is overseen by a Review Board, whose experience helps inform the development of our products and services. Composed of rural and tribal operators and state transit officials, the Board provides expertise and local perspectives to ensure that our work is relevant, useful, and of the highest quality. Members also serve as National RTAP Ambassadors at conferences and participate in our events.

Board members serve a term of three years, with the potential for longer terms if elected to be Chair or Vice Chair. Previous members are eligible to serve again after being off the Board for three years. Calls for nominations are announced every two years, and the next will be announced in late 2021.

Get familiar with this invaluable resource and consider participating when the opportunity is available. www.nationalrtap.org.

So What Does This Have To Do With DTA?

Cheryl Jongerius, Director
Dickey County Senior Citizens
Dickey County Transportation

Once upon a time, long long ago, I moved from Glenwood, Minnesota after spending 4 years there as an Extension Agent to Dickey County, ND to become the director of a multi-purpose non-profit agency that provided as its' main services congregate and home delivered meals for older persons, transportation services and outreach. Needless to say, I had a lot to learn.

Back then, for rural areas the only operating money available for transit was through the Older Americans Act Title 3b program. You could buy a vehicle with the use of Federal monies administered through the state DOT's under the Federal Agency called UMTA – Urban Mass Transit Administration. As the name implies – transit money was really looked at needed in Urban areas – who needs a transit ride in a rural area?

Gradually over time, there was a shift in focus to providing “rural” public transit. UMTA's name was changed to FTA – Federal Transit Administration and operating funds were finally made available for rural services. How did this transformation come about? It was made possible by many voices being persistent with their Senators and Representatives and national groups like CTAA and state organizations such as the Dakota Transit Association (DTA) advocating for support for rural transit.

I was first made aware that DTA existed by the late Rick Thoms – former Director of Souris Basin Transportation. When we had meetings of the Older Americans Act providers, Rick would always encourage everyone to get involved in DTA. My thinking at the time was that I had enough on my plate without going to meetings of another group.

Especially after my career in Extension where 90% of your life was spent going to, planning for and/or presenting at meetings of all kinds.

Eventually, Rick's persistence paid off and I attended my first DTA conference in the fall of 1988 in Pierre, SD. I am not sure how many of you were at that meeting, but it was kind of memorable for lots of reasons and many enjoyed the live band (on a weekday night!) at a joint in Fort Pierre (those stories are for another time). One result of this meeting is I don't think there has been another DTA conference in Pierre since then.

I met lots of new folks at this conference. Some of the “urban” providers from North Dakota and the rural and urbans from South Dakota along with the South Dakota state staff. The North Dakota “state staff” consisted of one person back then. What I learned at this conference is that there were a lot of different ways to accomplish our transit mission and even though ND and SD were in the same Federal region – they had very different ideas and requirements about how transit was supposed to be implemented. I also started to figure out who was good at what – so when I needed help, I had an idea of who to call depending on the type of problem. I also found all of the other transit providers to be very willing to share their knowledge about rural transit and stories of their successes and failures. Many of the “failure” stories were memorable and funny. Has anybody ever had a job applicant give their address as a “field south of town” and one of their references was “God”? I have. For sure I knew I was definitely in a strange new world of hiring and supervising employees. My fellow DTA members had thoughtful and useful ideas about how to handle a persistent applicant like the one described.

As many of you can relate, I have learned more over the years about transit by talking with my fellow transit providers than I have from any other source or sources. When the Feds passed their first requirements for drug and alcohol testing, I found myself on a committee of some fellow ND and SD DTA members trying to figure out how we were going to get this done. The first rule did not affect CDL drivers so there were very few drivers to be tested – and no clinics/hospitals were equipped to do

this. We had some interesting meetings at some kind of dumpy hotels in South Dakota (no offense to SD – but something about the per diem rules back then for SD were different than ND which forced all the meetings to be in SD is less than glamorous places). A lawsuit was brought by some national group to throw out this testing rule and that is what happened. Our committee’s work was then not needed – which included reading about 7 pages in the Federal Register in tiny little print about the shy bladder syndrome! As you all know a Drug and Alcohol rule was eventually passed that stood up to court scrutiny and the “stuff” I learned on that DTA committee was eventually all needed to implement the rule on a local level.

Now many years have passed since then and DTA has had many other issues to tackle. By working together, we learned from each other, leaned on each other, advocated for needed changes and sometimes used how the “other” state did something to our advantage – “why is our process for implementing (fill in the black) 10 pages and South Dakota’s is 2 pages?”

It is time for this rambling to close. The Dakota Transit Association (DTA) can provide transit providers experienced and novices alike a chance to address issues of importance to transit and learn from each other. I am wishing all of you safe winter driving for all of your passenger trips.

DTA-What It Can Mean for You!

**Carol Anderson, Director
West River Transit**

Dakota Transit Association is valuable to all agencies that have needs in transit training, certification for yourself and drivers, open forum discussions, and the best is the networking among our collages. I have learned so much at the DTA conferences through my 30 years at WRT. I couldn't begin to put it all on paper. The assistance I have received since starting my position as director many years ago was invaluable. It made my work life much easier and I had a large group of professionals that were always there to assist when I needed it. As a group we can help, maintain and grow in the transit world, with

each other, knowing that with the masses comes the knowledge! I am never too old or been here to long not to learn from all these amazing professionals.

I was on the DTA board several times through the years and each time I have learned more than I could by reading, researching, and all the trial and errors. There is nothing like our transit family of DTA members. They all work so diligently to bring us what we need as directors.

The DTA Roadeo has been an amazing tool for our agency, not just the training & driving for the drivers and the roadeo itself, but the comradery between all involved. You learn so much from each other, it is such a well-developed event.

If you have not considered becoming a DTA member, you will not regret it! The knowledge you will bring back to your agency can only enhance your agency.

TRAINING UPDATE

Contact Information:

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We are still in a bit of a lull as far as training because of holidays and weather, but I do want to thank all for not asking me to travel in the nasty weather!

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

CTAA has been sending everything digitally since the beginning of the pandemic, which has changed how we handle some of our paperwork. The student manual is sent out to agencies sending people to the classes in digital format for them to print or pass on to their people attending the class in digital format. The certificates are also sent digitally so that agencies can just print and post. There are still classroom books for the defensive driving class.

A great big “Happy New Year” to you all.

