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TRANSIT TIDBITS

Issue 123
April 2022

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH
APRIL 2022

You are never too important to be nice to people.



Past, Present & Future

Ron Baumgart, Director
River Cities Public Transit

Serving as the Executive Director of River Cities Public Transit for 21 years has provided me many great opportunities and challenges throughout the years. The one constant I have always focused on is

providing the best service and most service possible, this seems to get RCPT through some of the tough spots and keeps us moving forward. We all as directors or staff of any transit agency have faced many challenges. Covid certainly rates towards the top of the challenges faced. For some of the newer folks to transit I thought it would be good to share a little of RCPT’s past, present and future, both accomplishments and challenges. My reasoning for this is just to show all involved in public transit to never give up and always keep focused on our main goals of providing the best service possible with the assets we have.

The Past

Community Coordinated Transportation Systems dba: River Cities Public Transit (RCPT) was formed in 1998. In the beginning it operated Monday through Friday 7:00am to 5:00pm, closed for all holidays. I started as Director November 2001 to find many challenges that I’m sure the Board of Directors were not even aware of. No tax returns had been filed; no We owned 3 buses that were all broke down and had 2 borrowed from the SDDOT. The first month I became aware of over \$200,000.00 of unpaid bills and obligations.

By Spring of 2002 we were able to have most of our obligations paid and buses repaired so we could continue to grow and provide more service. On a Friday night in April our buses were all destroyed by fire when the City of Pierre’s warehouse burnt down. Borrowing a couple buses from our local churches we never missed a day of service, and thanks to SDDOT 4

new buses were delivered to Pierre the Tuesday after the fire, unbelievable how quick the response and the faith SDDOT had in the transit that seemed to be the laughingstock of transits in South Dakota.

Good news of our past is many awards for our service. The one I am most proud of is Transit Agency of the Year Awarded to RCPT by CTAA in 2006. Again, I share this just to make a point to just keep focused and moving forward.

The Present

RCPT at present serves 11 counties in Central South Dakota, operates the public transit for Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, and manage Yankton Transit. RCPT provides 365 days per year, 24 hours per day service in the Pierre-Fort service area. RCPT also operates an urban service in Sioux Falls providing service to agencies that provide service to individuals with disabilities.

In the past 2 years we have made several changes and improvements to help us provide safe service and comply with the Federal requirements. RCPT has added a fulltime media and communications coordinator, full time procurement specialist, fulltime lead driver & trainer and several other new duties assigned to existing staff.

RCPT is working to bring all needed services in house, we have purchased our own vinyl machine. This allows us to do our own graphics and advertising on our vehicles. RCPT has staff trained to install all technology in our vehicles including cameras, internet, state radios and AEDs. RCPT has registered our own CDL trainers to provide the training needed to acquire CDL's for our drivers and other agencies if needed. We are also fortunate to have our own certified trainer for first aid, CPR and AED training. We have found all of this has helped us to get vehicles ready and drivers trained much more efficiently.

RCPT has been very aggressive applying for additional grant opportunities. We were fortunate to receive an IMI Grant (Innovative Mobility Initiative

Grant). The grant awarded us and our partner Avera Health \$500,000.00 to implement new technology in scheduling and service. RCPT is working with Shah Software to build a booking system that will allow healthcare providers as well as individual passengers to book a trip online and receive a confirmation for the scheduled trip. We are excited to get this operational soon.

RCPT in partnership with Community Transit & Vermillion Transit received an RTAP Rides to Wellness Grant for \$100,000.00 to expand access to medical appointments. This grant is working well and being used at the present time.

I consider the greatest accomplishment with grants is our partnership with Stanley County Post #20 American Legion. Several years ago, we applied for a Highly Rural Transportation Grant funded through the Veterans Department. We received a grant for Stanley County to provide free rides to Veterans for medical appointments. Years later with our additional partner Prairie Hills Transit, and several other agencies in South Dakota that we have established MOU's with, our service has grown. We now provide free medical rides to Veterans in all 35 counties that qualify in South Dakota and 7 counties in Wyoming next to Prairie Hills Transit's service area.

Technology has also been a big part of change at RCPT in the past few years. RCPT has 24 hour per day dispatch services, the technology has allowed us to dispatch from multiple locations. At present time we have dispatch staff in Rapid City, Eagle Butte, Sioux Falls and Pierre. This is something I never thought would happen but has worked well. RCPT also has a full-time employee that works for us from home living in Huron.

I could certainly share more; I hope you all get the idea we must always be ready for change. I share with all our staff the only thing constant at RCPT is change!

The Future

I have heard it said, “you can’t predict the future”! I personally think you can at least prepare for what you know will happen in the future. RCPT is very focused on our future and where it will take us in the public transit industry. October 1, 2021, RCPT changed its management structure to prepare for the years ahead. Adam Sharkey and Mallory Meier were promoted to Deputy Directors. Andy Sharp and Shawna Sengelmann were moved into Operations Managers for the day-to-day operations of RCPT. As the Director getting close to retirement, I wanted to make sure we had the right people in place that can carry RCPT forward. This gives these individuals time to work with our Board of Directors and build that relationship that is so important.

Our contracts with Eagle Butte and Sioux Falls will continue to be very important for the future stability and growth of RCPT. RCPT has a fulltime Operations Supervisor for Eagle Butte and added a Site Supervisor for our Sioux Falls operation. Both positions are very important to promote growth in the future years.

In the very near future, we are planning a complete remodel of our offices and dispatch center to prepare us for future demand and the latest technology. RCPT will be building a bus facility in Highmore, SD to house our vehicles and provide a site for meetings and trainings. Our latest plan for expansion is a new building at our Pierre site to house our large youth busses, snow removal equipment, and shop maintenance vehicles. So as RCPT continues to prepare for the future we keep responding to unmet needs. One of my other statements I use often is, “as a business we are either growing or dying”. I feel we have done everything possible to make sure RCPT continues to grow and coordinate with other transit agencies to ensure success for all.

2022 DTA General Membership

Jacque Senger
DTA Executive Director

The Board of Directors is still in the process of putting together the next DTA Conference in Aberdeen, SD, September 16th through the 20th, 2022.

Our Conference Title this year is “Making A Difference”. In our ever-changing world today, that can be a challenge.

Our topics so far are Propane-Powered Transportation, Communication--The Language of Leadership and FTA Procurement.

Just a reminder that at the present time I have not received any award nominations forms. Please feel free to send soon. Another reminder---if you have not sent in your DTA Membership Form for 2022, it is not too late. Your Board of Director’s Would love to see all transit agencies participate in DTA.



TRAINING UPDATE

Contact Information

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A BIG Thanks to Chris Lundeby for teaching the class in Devils Lake. It was his maiden voyage in PASS training and except for some “technical problems”, all went well. Thanks again Chris!

I’ve received a few e-mails asking where the next training will be, so if any of you are willing to host a training, please let me know.

We have several trainers in both states, so please contact me via phone or email (see contact information above) if you would like to host a class during 2022. Thank You!

Happy Easter to you all, and as always, thank you all for what you do for those who need your services!

2022 GREAT START

David Richter, Executive Director
Williston Council for the Aging

2022 has gotten off to a great start for us at Northwest Dakota Public Transit.

Our ridership is increasing every day and would be considered at capacity, but it seems that we can always add 1 more.

We serve as a vital mode of transportation for our seniors and veterans along with all the other riders to medical appointments, shopping, work and to attend activities at our senior center.

We have been keeping track of our ridership numbers since the start of COVID and now we are at 4 times the ridership that we had at the start of 2020.

We have a very dedicated and hardworking staff who are very flexible with our scheduling and able to fill in or work longer shifts as needed.

NWDPT has several vehicles on order and will be able to add them to our fleet as soon as they arrive. We will be adding new routes and being able to transport to area medical facilities for their safety and convenience of our patrons.



Valley Senior Services Transit

Paul W. Grindeland, Director
Fargo, ND

In September of 2021 Valley Senior Services (VSS) celebrated a milestone anniversary – 50 years ago, what was then the Fargo Senior Commission was organized and began serving the seniors of Fargo. Transit service for seniors in the Fargo area started in 1972 with two volunteer drivers using their own vehicles. Fargo Senior Commission was the

first senior program in North Dakota to receive funding under the Older Americans Act; a portion of this funding was used in the 1970's and 80's to operate the senior ride program in Fargo/West Fargo. Fast forward to 2022, Valley Senior Services now operates a transit service that includes an urban senior ride service and a multi-county public transit service. Combined, these two services provide transit in parts of eight counties with 26 vehicles and a staff of 57 employees.

Metro Senior Ride Service

Senior ride services are provided in the F-M metro area serving the cities of Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth. Under an intergovernmental agreement, the Minnesota Cities of Moorhead and Dilworth contract with VSS for senior ride services. Moorhead and Dilworth and the State of Minnesota provide vehicles and funding for the Minnesota operations, VSS provides drivers and administration. The Metro Senior Ride Service does not use any Federal Funding for operations or capital, each city we serve contributes money towards vehicle purchases. State Aid for Public Transit and Senior Mill Levy funding along with other local dollars are utilized to provide this service on the North Dakota side.

Public Transit

In the early 1990's VSS began providing Public Transit in Traill County. By 2003 we were providing Public Transit services in Cass, Traill, Steele, Richland, Ransom, Sargent and southern Grand Forks Counties. Major

destinations in our seven-county service area include: Fargo, Wahpeton, Lisbon, Hillsboro, Finley and Grand Forks.

We are proud of the services we provide and are honored to help so people. Thank you to the Cities of Fargo, West Fargo, Moorhead and Dilworth, DTA, NDDOT, Fargo Park District, Southeast Senior Services and several County Councils on Aging for being valued VSS partners in the delivery of transit services in our region.



Tidbit Articles

Please contact me with articles for your agency.

Recycle:

Please share your Transit Tidbit with your staff and any interested person.

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 Senger, Executive Director, DTA

WWW.dakotatransit.org

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