



TRANSIT TIDBITS

Issue 128

OCTOBER 2022

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH OF OCTOBER 2022

**The Most Wasted of Days is
one Without Laughter**

DAKOTA TRANSIT ASSOCIATION ROADEO AND CONFERENCE WAS ANOTHER GREAT SUCCESS

Jacque Senger, Executive Director DTA

First off, I would like to thank each and every one of you for making our DTA Conference in Aberdeen, SD what it was, GREAT! Thank you for the great attendance.

Our Roadeo started off and finished with much success. We had a great awards ceremony followed by networking with all the transit folks.

Our Sessions were Navigating the Reasonable Modification World, FTA Procurements & FTA Construction Projects, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, Communication-Language of Leadership, Creating

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Customer Connections, Recruiting a Sustainable Driver Workforce in a Tight Labor Market, and our final session was Path to Zero Emissions.

Our Vendor Show followed which was well attended by all.

I hope by putting a summary of all these articles in the Transit Tidbit over the next month or two you will be able to sit back and reflect on some of the thoughts shared and for those of you who could not make the conference, I hope you can also enjoy what your Dakota Transit Association brought to the table this year.

Kludt Assumes CTAA State Delegate Role

Barb Cline, CTAA President

Gayle Kludt of People's Transit in Huron was recently appointed to assume the role of the South Dakota State Delegate for the Community Transportation Association of American.

CTAA members in each state elect a State or Tribal Delegate to represent them; a group that collectively acts as an advisory body to the Board of Directors and

CTAA staff. The roles of the individual Delegate are key to building a strong and responsive national organization.

Delegates are an important link between the Association and its membership, and CTAA relies on Delegates to keep the Board and staff in touch with the trends, needs, views and priorities of the membership. This linkage can best be accomplished by continued communication with CTAA staff and members in the state. In this way, Delegates create and support an organization that responds to them about its activities and policy development.

Dale Bergman continues as the North Dakota State Delegate.

2022 DTA VENDOR SHOW Complete Success

Barb Cline, Vendor Coordinator

Wow! I believe that the 2022 Trade Show in Aberdeen will be one that is talked about for many years to come. The lemon we were thrown-having no company to set up our piping and draping, turned in flavors of lemonade we never imagined. As the numbers for our Show continued to climb, I began to get a little nervous. Knowing we had a room with few electric outlets and 2/3 of the vendors' needing electricity was the biggest issue. Finding someone to set up the Show was another issue because we could get a trailer with all the drapes and pipes but no staff to do the set-up. After reaching out to the DTA Board to find some "hired hands" I rented the trailer with no idea what to do next.

When DTA Board member Adam Sharkey backed the trailer in and opened it I know we both looked like deer in the headlights. No directions, no idea what to do next and 30 booths to set up...it was going to be a long afternoon. Overwhelmed by all the pieces and with what to do next we called on Lisa Nippolt and Larry Mayberry, two vendors staying at the hotel. Adam and I started carrying pieces in and eventually the parts started coming together. DTA Board members, spouses, vendors, and conference attendees all pitched in to help and the Trade Show floor was transformed into a vision that could compete with the

best. Abundant and profuse praise for all the hands who helped.

At set up time on Tuesday most of the vendors had no idea the sweat equity that went into the booth each of them had. The final total of vendors set to attend was twenty-nine with one unable to attend and two who were unable to attend due to health concerns. We had three others who were unable to attend but still sponsored meals and advertised. The Trade Show floor bustled with activity and our vendors were very pleased with the traffic. Thank you to everyone for your assistance.

This year every award, break and meal were sponsored by our wonderful vendors, providing significant financial relief to the Dakota Transit Association.

Brian Horinka, DTA Board member, did an amazing job of getting every vendor ad into the program and also gave us vendor information at a glance for all those meeting the deadline.

At the end of the event, our beautiful Trade Show floor was taken down in record time and returned to the trailer. Our vendors, conference attendees and spouses all jumped in again and helped. I can't begin to thank everyone enough, but I can say that the level of teamwork I saw did fill my heart with the reason we're in this business. Transit folks are always there to help each other during the good times and when lemonade needs to be made. Thank you everyone

Creating a Sustainable Driver Workforce in a Tight Labor Market

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

Every business is feeling the crunch caused by an employee shortage. But what's the real issue here? Is it the lack of qualified drivers on the market? Probably not. Is the wage being offered an issue? Quite likely. But is there more to the problem than

what meets the eye? Caryn Souza thinks that could be the cause.

Souza, the Deputy Executive Director for the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) provided her theories and a host of potential solutions to those in attendance at the 2022 Dakota Transit Association annual conference in September in Aberdeen.

“The driver is the heart and soul of the transportation program and the service provided by the driver helps older adults and people with disabilities live independent, quality lives by providing them access to necessary community services,” said Souza. “We are fighting a driver shortage everywhere across the country, not just here in the Dakotas.”

Prior to joining the CTAA in 1994, Souza’s background was as a human Resource Manager with Macy’s. She Brought her expertise in employee relations and customer service from the private sector to her leadership solution for more than 20 years as CTAA’s Membership Director.

Souza currently serves as Deputy Executive Director of CTAA’s Training and certification program who in coordination with the CTAA training team expanded CTAA’s high quality training certification and on-line courses into the virtual format around a wide variety of topics that involve all aspects of professional development and certification for the community transportation industry.

Not enough funding is one of the issues facing transit leaders when it comes to hiring employees, especially the drivers. Couple that issues with the fact the Walmart’s and McDonalds of the world are able to pay higher starting wages to potential hires. Why work for 12 to 14 dollars per hour when they can bring in considerably more flipping burgers. Transit providers have been scrambling to get themselves back to the hiring table.

There is money out there for public transportation, but securing the local match is another issue being faced,” said Souza. Providers need to think outside the box and become creative to get the drivers to the bus.”

Shortening applications, creating drivers’ websites within your webpage are just a couple of potential ideas according to Souza. Self-promotion, more promotion, employee referral programs are other methods Souza says have the possibility of bringing potential drivers to the table.

Social media and job boards are pieces she suggested providers try. Use free and paid for listings and pages to post job openings and do it multiple times but keep them short.

“People today don’t want to read. If it’s over three minutes, they get bored and move on,” said Souza. “Create multiple ads to reach multiple markets. Hire for attitude, you can always teach skills.”

Newspaper is dead but recording and posting short videos has been successful in getting people in the door. Promote diversity in your program if you have it. Use authentic words from your drivers. A picture speaks volumes.

Statistically, she said 80 percent of all job applications are accessed by cell phones. Make sure yours is cell phone friendly and make sure its easy access. Having a designated employee to keep in touch with applicants is a good practice. Look for applicants who may want to be trained in multiple areas.

Summary of ideas for recruiting drivers•

- Provide realistic job preview use social media, web
- Develop/feature employee referral program
- Use social networking platforms
- Structure interview protocols, situational/realistic
- Host job fair tailored to the position hours
- Review/update onboarding process, as needed
- Identify/include attitude in advertising and job description

TRAINING UPDATE

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We had a great group at our October classes in Dickinson. Also, I need to send a great big

“Thank You” to the staff at Dickinson for all they did to make the classes go so well. Great Job! Here’s a photo of our group.



Watertown is still planning on holding a couple of sets of classes, but no dates have been set yet.

If any of you would like to host a class, please contact me. I will continue to make arrangements through the end of 2022.

Keep on doing what you all do so well!

Navigating the Reasonable Modification World

Terry Hoffman, Co-Executive Director
Community Transit of Watertown-Sisseton, inc.

It’s a simple question. What does Reasonable Modification mean? The answer is much more complex than the question, but one June Hansen is always eager to provide.

“Agencies are required to make reasonable modifications to policies, practices and procedures to avoid discrimination and ensure their programs are accessible to individuals with disabilities,” said Hansen. “This applies to agency policy and practice, not regulations.”

Hansen has been with the state government for 37 years and with the SDDOT for 33 years. She began her career as a Personnel Specialist. She also worked

as Internal Auditor until taking her current position as Civil Rights Compliance Officer/ADA Coordinator in 2000. Her responsibilities include administering the Title VI program, the EEO program, On the Job Training, ADA Program and handling Tribal relations for the department. She also serves as the DOT Mentoring Program Coordinator the New Employee Orientation Coordinator, and other special projects.

Samples of “Reasonable Modification” are

- Allowing an operator to pull up a reasonable distance from an obstructed stop
- Pick up at hard to maneuver Spots and specific entrances.
- Assist in extreme weather
- Help rider with fare media
- Allow passenger with medical condition to eat/drink to avoid health issues

For every rule there is always an exception. Some of the exceptions are as follows.

- Fundamental alteration of service
- Direct threat to the health or safety of others
- Not needed by the requester to use the service
- Undue financial/administrative burden

No reasonable modification should be made if the change is so significant it alters the nature of the service. Don’t change the nature of your service.

“Your service is public transportation, and you still need to get people from point A to point B,” said Hansen. “The bus driver is never expected to be a personal care attendant.”

Exclusive rides, specific vehicle requests, operating outside area and /or hours and functions like carrying packages and staying with unattended passengers are all examples of fundamental alteration to service. No reasonable modification will be required if it creates a significant risk to the health or safety of others. No Reasonable Modification shall be made when the

individual with a disability is able to fully use the entity's services, programs or activities for their intended purpose without the requested modifications.

The question of denial of service rears its ugly head more often today than ever.

- The transit provider cannot solely refuse service due to appearance alone, behavior that may offend, annoy or inconvenience employees or riders
- Hygiene issues
- Cannot be permanent unless an individual continues to pose a direct threat to health or safety of others
- Provide a rider required to travel with an attendant the opportunity to appeal the requirement.

Transit providers should make every attempt to resolve the issues before denying service including making a reasonable attempt to resolve issues with riders, guardians and/or appropriate caregivers. Contacting local disability organizations or government agencies to assist in resolving issues. Document the incident or incidents leading to the service denial showing how it rises to level of severity to warrant denying service. Provide the rider with a written warning before denying service and be sure to always follow your policy.

“Whatever actions are taken or not taken, make sure you have thoroughly documented details of the incidents leading to the refusal,” said Hansen. “Make sure all of your information is available to the public and on your website.”

Tidbit Articles:

Please contact me with articles for your agency.

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

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!



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