



TRANSIT TIDBITS
Issue 130
DECEMBER 2022

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH OF
DECEMBER 2022

~~~Kindness goes a long way~~~

**CHRISTMAS TREE DISPLAY IN**  
**PIERRE, SOUTH DAKOTA**  
Gayle Kludt, Executive Director  
People's Transit

On Wednesday, November 30<sup>th</sup> People’s Transit (PT) partnered with the Huron Area Senior Center (HASC) to provide transportation to 15 merry souls to tour the

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annual Christmas at the Capitol Christmas tree display in Pierre. Nearly 100 trees are decorated by volunteers from communities, schools, churches, nonprofit organizations and state government offices. On Sunday, December 4<sup>th</sup> we loaded up two buses and travelled to Mitchell to see the production by the Church Basement Ladies “Away in the Basement” A Christmas Musical Comedy put on by the Mitchell Area Community Theatre. People’s Transit’s partnership with the HASC, and the transportation provided, is possible as a charter exception because the HASC is a Qualified Human Service Organization (QHSO). PT also delivers Meals on Wheels 5 days a week to the Wolsey Area Senior Center from the Beadle County Area Nutrition (BCAN), which is run by the HASC.



## **TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR SAFETY (TRACS)**

Adam Sharkey, Deputy Director  
River Cities Public Transit

Last spring, in April, I applied for a position on the **Transit Advisory Committee for Safety (TRACS)**.

The committee is comprised of 25 transportation professionals from across the United States, each serving a 2-year term. The U.S. Secretary of Transportation, FTA Administrator, and their designees tasked TRACS members with issues relating to the safety of U.S. public transportation systems. So this committee's purpose is to provide information, advice, and recommendations on all matters pertaining to public transportation safety.

Honestly, I didn't think I had a shot at this. Although I have been in the transit industry for over a decade and have served as a safety officer for the last five years, I wasn't tremendously confident that my resume and application would be accepted. There are a lot of people out there with many more years of experience than I possess.

As the months passed without a word on the status of my application, I assumed I was passed over and would apply again if the opportunity presented itself. It turns out I didn't have to apply again! Last week I was notified that I was accepted onto the committee and my two-year term would begin immediately. I was elated and humbled by the opportunity at the same time.

I love the transit industry. It has and continues to provide me with great opportunities to grow. I know I still have so much to learn, and I push myself daily to be a leader like the ones I see representing their agencies at the DTA.

Eleven years ago, I never would've imagined that I'd be getting an opportunity like this. But over the years, I've had fantastic support from my RCPT Family and, most recently, the DTA Board Members.

Jacque asked me to write about TRACS, but I also wanted to recognize and thank everyone at RCPT, the DTA Board, SDDOT, SD Transit Providers, and most importantly, my wonderful family for supporting me on this journey. I appreciate you all.

## **CTAA BOARD POSITION**

Andy Sharp  
Operations Manager  
River Cities Public Transit

I was fortunate to be elected to a board member position for the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), representing transit agencies in the Upper Midwest region.

This appointment is for a 3-year term and will consist primarily of oversight and operation of the association. I am excited to participate in this position and look forward to learning a lot from the other members.

In October, I participated in my first meeting as a board member in Oklahoma City. The multi-day meeting allowed for introductions among new and existing members and planning for the CTAA Expo that will be in Oklahoma City in 2023. Additionally, we reviewed and discussed reports on the operations of the CTAA staff and toured the transit facility and metropolitan area of Oklahoma City.

I am excited and promise it will be a great EXPO this year. I am proud of the opportunity to represent the agencies in the Upper Midwest region. I know this will be a great learning experience for me, and I intend to share my experience with my fellow DTA member agencies.

## **TRAINING UPDATE**

Contact Information  
Linda Freeman 701-848-6480  
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We have set up a class in Watertown for Wednesday, December 28<sup>th</sup> and Thursday, December 29<sup>th</sup> as follows:

PASS CLASS: 8am-4pm December 28 and 8am-Noon December 29 at Lake Area Technical College – 1201 Arrow Ave. NE Main Entrance  
DEFENSIVE DRIVING: 4:00 pm December 28 at the College.

PASS (Day 2), PASS RECERTIFICATION: 8am to Noon with Hands On Portion to be held at Community Transit facility in the afternoon – 205 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. NE in Watertown.

HANDS ON ONLY: (For those who have taken the on-line PASS Class) – Afternoon of December 29<sup>th</sup> – Community Transit facility.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE for all Watertown Classes is December 15<sup>th</sup>. Register by e-mailing Linda at e-mail above. Please include names and which classes they will be attending in the e-mail.

A second set of classes is set up for January 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023 at Aberdeen. Class schedule times will be the same as those above except for date held. Classroom portions will be held at the Ramkota Theatre Room – 1400 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. NW in Aberdeen. Hands on portion will be held at the Ride Line Bus Facility. All information is on the DTA web site. A block of rooms at DTA rates is set up at the Ramkota. Please ask for Dakota Transit Association block when making your reservations.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE for Aberdeen classes is December 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022.

Since this will be my last tidbit article, I'd like to take a moment to tell you all what a real joy it has been for me to work with all of you. You and your staffs are remarkable people whose dedication to what you do is awesome. I plan to continue doing some of the face to face training when needed so will see some of you occasionally. Please welcome Rod Grafing as your training coordinator beginning January 1, 2023.

Keep on doing what you all do so well and Happy Holidays to you all!

## HONOR FLIGHT NETWORK

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

Looking over grainy photos, Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton, Inc. transit driver Darold Richards smirked, “Sure didn’t look like much of a fighting machine did I.” The baby faced 18-year-old in the photo was just one of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers who served in Southeast Asia. Choosing to enlist in the United States Army rather than wait to be drafted, meant getting the opportunity to choose where your destination would ultimately be or so he thought. Richards and a cousin made the decision believing they would get that choice, but it never happened. Instead, Richards was eventually sent to South Vietnam where he would serve and fight for a year.



Fast forward through time, Richards recently returned from an emotional and thought-provoking trip to Washington, DC as part of the Honor Flight Network. “I am very glad I went; we were treated fantastic by everyone involved,” said Richards. “It was a very emotional experience and I believe it has helped wash

away some of the bad experiences we went through when returning from Vietnam.”

The Honor Flight Network was formed in 2005 with a mission of honoring the nation’s veterans by bringing them to Washington, DC to visit the memorials and monuments dedicated to their service and sacrifice. Originally focused on honoring our nation’s World War II veterans, the Honor Flight Network now also honors those who served in the Korean War, Vietnam War, intermediary operations, and in special cases of terminal illness or injury, veterans from more recent service eras.

Since its formation, the Honor Flight Network has taken more than 245,000 veterans to Washington D.C. Today, the Honor Flight Network is comprised of over 128 hubs throughout the country dedicated to carrying out the Honor Flight mission. More than 22,000 veterans are served annually.

“We came home to protests and taunts and it hurt,” said Richards. “Time heals and the treatment we received on this trip all help to ease the pain. I doubt I will ever forget, but it helps.”

His tour in Vietnam was spent near Lai Khe as part of an engineering company supporting an infantry unit. Part of their duties were to sweep areas for mines and clear landing strips for helicopters. While on duty on June 20, 1966, Richards said their unit was overrun by the enemy and were eventually being shot at with their own weapons.

“I’m not a religious guy, but I recall asking God for one more day,” said Richards. “We took a lot of casualties in that fight. It was my worst day there.” Richards more fortunate than others, taking shrapnel to the shoulder, but nothing life threatening. Air support eventually arrived and the unit was able to be rescued. His tour in Southeast Asia would end in 1967, one year to the date he had arrived. After returning to the states and Ft. Bragg, one of his duties was to participate in riot control in various U.S. cities and Washington, DC.

“When we first came home, the protests and names didn’t matter that much because we were just glad to be home and safe,” said Richards. “Riot patrol was

pretty intense. We were fighting for our lives and come home and they called us killers.” Today, far removed from those memories, Richards is quite content to provide service for the riders of CTWSI and tend to his farm and horses.



## **NEW PASS TRAINING COORDINATOR**

**Rod Grafing  
South Central Network**



Hello! My name is Rod Grafing. I am 56 years old and live in Valley City, ND. I spent the first 35 years of my work life in the trucking industry, starting with my family’s business hauling milk from area farms in eastern North Dakota and then operating my own trucking company for ten years. In August of 2013, I started driving taxi part time for South Central Transit Network. In February of 2017; I left the trucking industry and was hired as the transit coordinator at

South Central Transit. I became a PASS trainer shortly after that and began conducting classes with Linda Freeman. Over the past several years, I've learned so much from Linda as I'm sure many of you have. No matter what I needed when it came to training, Linda had the answer or knew which direction to point me in. That's why when I heard she was retiring as DTA's PASS training coordinator; I knew someone was going to have some big shoes to fill. I would never have guessed that person would be me. As of January 1, 2023, I will attempt to take the reins from her and begin serving as the new PASS training coordinator for DTA. I know things will probably be a little bumpy in the beginning but thankfully, Linda has agreed to help me through the transition. I know from my own experience here at South Central, just how crucial driver training and regular recertification is to our line of work. I hope to follow in Linda's footsteps by continuing to provide assistance in coordinating PASS training sessions for agencies in North and South Dakota. I look forward to the challenge and even more to getting to know more of you in the transit community.

## **LOW/NO EMISSIONS AND PROPANE FUEL**

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

The proof is in the numbers. When discussing the topic of alternative fuels, this statement rings true. Cost savings decreased impact on the environment and reduced maintenance costs are a few of the reasons why alternative fuels should be strongly considered.

Propane is one of the fuels many in the transportation industry are taking a long look at as replacement for traditional fuel sources. The benefits are according to Steve Whaley, Director of Autogas Business Development for PERC (Propane Education & Research Council).

"Propane is a very cost effective and cleaner burning than any fuel being used in transit today," said Whaley "The cost is also much less than

normal fuels, something we all love to hear."

Whaley was joined by Jill Drury and Andy Ernst for the presentation. Drury has spent her career working in government positions including 12 years as the Director at Charlevoix County Transit in Northern Michigan. CCT was the recipient of the 2018 Propane Autogas Fleet Award presented by PERC and the 2021 CTAARural Transit System of the Year. Ernst is the development and marketing manager for CHS Propane. He is responsible for developing propane marketing programs to help retailers grow their gallons.

Many of the characteristics of the gas, make propane a favorite to the consumer. Combine the fact it is affordable, clean burning and a byproduct of natural gas processing with the knowledge of it being American made make it a favorite.

Propane is liquid in state below minus 42 degrees Fahrenheit, weighs 100 psi at 60-degree ambient temperature, is heavier than air and does not require expensive ventilation systems. Propane provides a low carbon, hydrogen rich source of energy.

"From October of 2021 to August of 2022, we saved \$60,708.93 in fuel costs at CCT," said Drury. "We saved over \$46,000 dollars in fuel by using propane and received a fuel tax credit of over more than \$14,000. Seventy seven percent of our vehicles operate on alternative fuel sources."

Supply versus demand for propane in the United States continues to grow indicating stable prices for the commodity now and into the future according to Whaley. How will users of the fuel be able to obtain propane? Public, private and C-store fuel dispensers will be able to access national credit cards and collect driver data from the consumers. The experience will be similar to purchasing gas or diesel from a pump.

Planning will be a key to any operation, especially at fueling stations," said Whaley. "Site location, site dimensions, who has local jurisdiction, required distances from buildings,

property lines and sources of ignitions, traffic patterns, type and thickness of surface around dispenser, contractors needed and electrical needs all must be considered during planning phase."

Propane comes from organic as well as renewable sources. It's non-toxic, meaning it does not contaminate air, soil or water sources.

So, what's next for those wishing to move to propane as their alternate fuel source?

"CHS will work with the marketer to identify the right dispense for your project," said Ernst. "We have hired a project manager at CHS to help with this process."

Ernst added CHS staff will work with a consultant to offer grant writing services and on-site dispenser training.

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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!



**Jacquie Senger, Executive Director, DTA**

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