



**TRANSIT TIDBITS**  
**Issue 168 MAY 2026**

**THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH OF  
MAY**

**“Alone, we can do so little.  
Together, we can do so much.”**

**DTA 2026 ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE REMINDER**

**Jacque Senger, Executive Director**

Your 2026 DTA Conference will be held in Huron, SD, September 19<sup>th</sup> through the 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2026. The conference will be held at the Huron Event Center and the Rodeo at the SD State Fairgrounds. We have secured rooms at the Crossroads Hotel. More information will be placed in the Tidbit as we finalize the conference.

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- 2026 DTA Conference Page 1**  
**Training Updates Page 1-2**  
**Finding His Place Page 2-3**  
**CTAA Award Winners Page 4-5**  
**35<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference Page 5**



**TRAINING UPDATE**

**Contact Information**

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Summer is almost here! If you have employees in need of PASS and Defensive Driver training or would like to host a class, let me know.

Are you or someone from your agency Interested in becoming a PASS trainer? CTAA now offers PASS - Train the Trainer certification 100% online. It's never been easier to become a PASS trainer.

If you have drivers/staff in need of training or re-certification and would like to inquire about or schedule a class, please contact Rod using the information listed above.

## **FINDING HIS PLACE**

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



CARTER HANSEN is a young man with special needs. He works as a detailer and custodian for a couple hours a day. He is part of a Vocational rehab program for kids out of high school but still needing to learn life skills.

Being a United Way partner, Community Transit has the opportunity each spring to

showcase a local success story when submitting their application.

Carter Hansen works for CTWSI part time Monday through Friday detailing buses and performing custodial duties. Carter's attitude towards his job and people in general set him apart from most. Carter's time with CTWSI is short, but it has been memorable. Here is his story.

### **BY CTWSI STAFF**

Carter Hansen wiped a line of soap from the side of the bus and stepped back to admire his work. The early morning sun reflected off the clean surface, and for a moment, he could see his own smile staring back at him.

Most mornings at Community Transit started the same way—grab the broom, check the list, and get to work. But for Carter, it never really felt routine. Each bus, each van, each task was another chance to do something right, to do something well. At 21 years old, Carter knew he wasn't just passing time—he was building something.

Through Project Skills, he was given an opportunity. Not just a job, but a place to learn, to grow, and to prove—to himself more than anyone else—that he could handle whatever came next. With guidance from Voc Rehab Services and support from his job coach, Hannah Grove, Carter found his rhythm.

“Start with the inside first,” Hannah would remind him some mornings, her voice calm but encouraging.

Carter would nod, already halfway there, broom in hand.

He likes the structure. The following directions helps him maintain his focus. It gave his thoughts a place to land and there was something satisfying about turning something dirty into something clean—about seeing the difference his effort made.

Sometimes he works quietly, other times, he jokes with the drivers coming in and out of the garage. He likes the people, feels they have treated him like part of the team, and that means everything.

One morning, after finishing up a bus, Carter picked up the power washer. At first, he had been unsure of it—the noise, the pressure—but now he handles it with confidence. Water sprayed in steady arcs as he moved with purpose, washing away dirt and grime.

Hannah watches from a distance, smiling. "Not every workplace would have given Carter this chance," she said, "but here, he has been trusted, and he has earned it.

"There are a lot of things to like here," Carter said, and he meant it. But even good things don't last forever.

Late May is coming fast and that means graduation from Project Skills. A new job is

waiting at a fast-food restaurant he already knows well. A new apartment, a new roommate he hasn't even met yet - all big changes are coming quickly.

One morning, after finishing his last task, Carter leaned the broom against the wall and looked around the garage. The floors were cleaner than they'd been that morning. The buses lined up neatly, shining just a little brighter. He took a deep breath. This place has helped him get ready, not just for a job—but for life.

"Ready for what's next?" Hannah asked as she walked up beside him. Carter smiled, a little nervous but mostly proud. "Yeah," he said. "I think I am."

And as he stepped out of the garage that day, Carter Hansen wasn't just leaving behind another shift. He was stepping forward into his future—one he had worked hard to build, one clean sweep at a time.

# COMMUNITY TRANSIT ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA AWARD WINNERS

**Barb Cline, Executive Director**

**Lisa Johnson, Deputy Director**

**Prairie Hills Transit**

**Spearfish, SD**



Community Transportation Association of America Names 2026 Award Winners. Omaha, Neb. – May 13, 2026 – The Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) proudly announced the winners of the 2026 Community Transportation Awards during its annual EXPO, recognizing individuals and organizations that have demonstrated exceptional commitment to providing mobility, innovation, and service to their community. These annual awards highlight the critical role community transit plays in connecting people to jobs, education,

healthcare, and vital services, particularly in rural and small urban areas. "The 2026 award recipients exemplify the heart of community transportation," said Scott Bogren, CTAA Executive Director. "Their innovative approaches to service, unwavering dedication to riders, and impactful partnerships are setting a new standard for transit agencies nationwide. They are truly bridging gaps and building stronger communities." "We congratulate all of the winners, and all of the nominees. They do so much for their communities, we're honored to be able to provide this recognition," shared Loreal Lance, CTAA Chief of Staff.

Winner: Small Transportation System of the Year Winner: ● Prairie Hills Transit (Spearfish, SD): Recognized for filling gaps for residents in the rural Black Hills area through expansive partnerships. The agency supports the greater community by connecting thousands of riders and leading South Dakota's environmentally conscious transportation goals. In 2024, they integrated propane autogas buses and installed the state's first propane fueling infrastructure, demonstrating a commitment to reducing emissions, reducing expenses, and maintaining reliability.

Nominated by ROUSH CleanTech, the Prairie Hills Transit team was honored to receive this National honor. The criteria considered was Responsiveness to its customers and community, Effectively helping the community accomplish their goals, Creating partnerships, and Providing accessible transportation service.

Prairie Hills Transit supports the greater community by employing drivers and staff, connecting thousands of riders in small towns and rural areas. Through an expansive list of

partnerships, Prairie Hills Transit is able to fill gaps for residents, such as same-day service, long-distance trips and increased access to essential services.

The vision of connecting rural communities has led to a fundamental change for thousands of people. What was once a single van dedicated to senior citizen mobility now connects over 13,000 riders of all ages across 16,500 square miles—one of the largest regions in South Dakota.

## **35<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ROADEO**

Terry Hoffman

Co-Executive Director

Community Transit of  
Watertown/Sisseton, Inc.

The Community Transportation Association of America held its 35th Annual Conference and Roadeo May 9–14 at the CHI Health Center Omaha in Omaha.

CTAA serves more than 1,200 member organizations through advocacy, training, resources, and professional events. Its members — including rural, small urban, tribal, non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT), and specialized transportation providers — are dedicated to ensuring Americans of all ages, abilities, income levels, and geographic locations have access to safe, affordable, and reliable transportation.

The Dakotas were well represented at the conference, with drivers and administrators attending from Standing Rock Public Transit, Prairie Hills Transit, River Cities Public

Transit, Sioux Area Metro, People's Transit, Oglala Sioux Transit, and Community Transit of Watertown/Sisseton.

Roadeo activities began Saturday with driver and judge meetings, followed by competition events and the awards banquet on Sunday. Approximately 80 drivers competed in one of three vehicle classes: van, 35-foot bus, or body-on-chassis bus.

During the conference, Vincennes Trolley of Vincennes and Prairie Hills Transit were recognized for excellence in rural transit operations. Prairie Hills Transit was honored for addressing transportation gaps throughout the rural Black Hills region through strong community partnerships and environmentally conscious initiatives. In 2024, the agency integrated propane Autogas buses into its fleet and installed South Dakota's first propane fueling infrastructure, reinforcing its commitment to reducing emissions, lowering operational costs, and maintaining reliable service.

Conference attendees also participated in a wide variety of educational sessions. Topics included artificial intelligence, employee mentoring, Federal Transit Administration updates, and emerging transportation technologies.

Outside the conference, attendees had the opportunity to enjoy many of Omaha's attractions, including parks, trails, shopping districts, and entertainment venues, providing something for everyone after a full day of training and networking.

The 2027 CTAA Conference and Roadeo will be held in Atlantic City.



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