



TRANSIT TIDBITS
Issue 169 JULY 2026

**THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH
OF JULY**

FREEDOM



**I hope each and every one of
you had a wonderful 4th of
July celebration!**

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WHERE DID JUNE GO

**Jacque Senger, Executive
Director**

First off, I must apologize to all transit individuals. June came and went and I forgot to get the June Tidbit put together. I heard from individuals wondering where it was? Well, thank you to those who contacted me and asked that question. Apparently, people miss it.

TRAINING UPDATE

Contact Information

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rod@southcentralseniors.org

PASS and Defensive Driving Classes were held in Aberdeen, SD at the end of May and Watertown, SD in June. Thank you, trainers, attendees and everyone who helped make these training sessions happen!

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.

DTA 2026 AWARDS

Jacque Senger, Executive Director

The DTA 2026 Awards packet was sent to the DTA Membership on June 15, 2026. Please return your nominations by July 31, 2026.

NON-EMERGENCY MEDICAID TRANSPORTATION

Pat Hansen, Director

**South Central Adult Services
Valley City, ND**

Our agency has provided this service for many years but with the new requirements we will be forced to stop providing the service. We provide hundreds of Medicaid rides each year and I am VERY concerned about the people who will not be able to get to their medical appointments and dialysis. My agency has 52 vehicles and has provided service to 18 counties in ND this year. We have 60 drivers, most of whom are retired DOT employees and truck drivers. I cannot, and will not, require them to apply for NPI numbers. Many of them do not even have email. We already require them to pass background checks, pre-employment and random drug and alcohol testing, PASS Training and Defensive Driving classes. There is a limit to what can be expected of them for the minimal wage they receive. Most of them drive because they care about their communities and their neighbors. The State sent out a 15-page instruction manual on how to apply for the required number.

Our transit systems are funded with FTA and NDDOT dollars and we meet all of their requirements which include vehicle registrations, proof of insurance, vehicle maintenance records and driver training. I believe it is reasonable to expect that agencies already subject to rigorous federal and state oversight should not face duplicative or impractical

administrative requirements that undermine our ability to operate. I can understand why this is required of private individuals, but not an agency that is already funded through the State and has an NPI number for the agency.

I would think that OMB would be concerned about the costs that will be incurred to Medicaid when all of their transportation has to be provided by for-profit providers with limited vehicles. One example we dealt with this past year was a dialysis patient from Carrington who was discharged from Fargo and had dialysis in Jamestown. He was scheduled through a company in Fargo that was charging over \$500 per day to take him to Jamestown. We contacted them and got him on our Jamestown bus for \$8. We only bill Medicaid riders the same fee we charge paying riders. We are already losing money on these rides due to the extensive paperwork and the billing process but I always felt it was an important service for our residents so we did it anyway.

I submitted the application without the NPI information on our drivers. I am guessing it will be denied, but thought it was worth a try.

I have contacted some of our legislators to see if they can help with this. Hopefully leadership and the Department of Human Services can help clarify whether there is flexibility in how these rules are applied to established, publicly funded transit providers.

PLANNING FOR THE 42nd ANNUAL DAKOTA TRANSIT CONFERENCE

**Terry Hoffman, Co-Director
CTWSI**

Planning for the annual Dakota Transit Association's Fall Conference and Rodeo are in the final stages. The event is scheduled for September 17-23 in Huron, SD. The Crossroads Hotel and Huron Convention Center will serve as the host sites.

The DTA Board of Directors is scheduled to meet in Huron on Thursday and Friday, July 22-23 to finalize last minute details, tour the host sites, including the SD State Fairgrounds where the Rodeo will be held.

Vendors, sponsors, speakers and presenters for the event have been locked down. You will see some familiar names and faces on the agenda and on stage plus several making their initial appearance at DTA. One major change will be the faces of the team from the Transportation Safety Administration. The TSA team that made the agencies initial venture to the DTA Conference and Rodeo came from Minneapolis. In recent years, the team was dispatched from Region 4 in Denver. Restructuring of the agency means the Region 3 staff from Minneapolis will return to the event. While admitting filling the shoes of "Keith and Carlos," is a big ask, the response from Region 3 team leader Jason Pettit was

"yep, those guys are awesome, but we're better." The gloves are off.



The opening weekend will continue to be about the drivers. Friday night training, networking and discussion about past and future Rodeo courses will dominate early on. Saturday will be full of mental and physical challenges on the course, accompanied by smiles, frowns and sighs of relief once the competition is complete.

Saturday night brings the Awards Banquet and entertainment. There will be the usual training Sunday morning training session, but with a twist. Participants will have a choice of what training they attend.

Sunday afternoon and evening plans include a choice of testing your skills at Broadland Creek Golf course or relaxing on a pontoon ride. Those events are still in the making, so stay tuned.

Monday brings a major change as the Vendor Show will take stage around midday. Monday night activities include entertainment and a salute to our vendors. Tuesday and Wednesday will include the usual variety of speakers and presenters.

The board continues to identify ways to make subtle but desired changes to our conference. We are confident we will have something for everyone. Hope to see you all in September.

WHEN A COMMUNITY STANDS TOGETHER

**Mallory Meier, Co-Director
River Cities Public Transit**

On June 29, a powerful storm swept through the Highmore area, leaving behind a trail of devastation. Homes were damaged or destroyed, buildings were lost, livestock perished, and in just a matter of minutes, life changed for many families throughout the community.

As emergency responders began assessing the damage, River Cities Public Transit received a call from Emergency Management Director Mr. Hall. There was an immediate need to evacuate residents, and he asked if our staff and vehicles could help. Without hesitation, Jim Frost answered the call.

When Jim arrived at our Highmore facility, the power was out, making it impossible to open the overhead bay doors. Using locking grips to manually secure the doors open, he was able to get transit vehicles out so evacuation efforts could begin.

Soon afterward, Edith joined him, but it quickly became apparent that more help was needed than the local staff alone could provide. Ron, Adam, Eric and Gary immediately volunteered to make the drive to Highmore, telling Emergency Management they would help in any way they could. Together, they assisted with evacuation efforts and helped ensure residents were transported safely.

Working alongside emergency responders, our team assisted in evacuating residents, including relocating individuals from Highmore Health to facilities in Gettysburg, Miller, and Pierre, ensuring they could continue receiving the care and support they needed during the emergency.

When the evacuations were complete, they didn't simply head home. Instead, they reported to the emergency command center with one simple question:

"What else can we do?"

Fortunately, our transit facility sustained only minor damage-just enough water inside that a squeegee could handle it. Many others were not as fortunate. Families were left standing where their homes once stood. Others faced damaged businesses, lost barns, and the

heartbreaking loss of livestock. The devastation was difficult to put into words.

**IN MOMENTS LIKE THESE, IT'S EASY TO
FOCUS ON DESTRUCTION,
BUT WHAT WE WITNESSED WAS
SOMETHING EVEN MORE POWERFUL.**

We witnessed neighbors helping neighbors without being asked. Volunteers arrived with tractors, skid loaders, chain saws, trailers, food, and willing hands. First responders, city crews, utility workers, emergency personnel, local businesses, and residents worked side by side, each doing whatever needed to be done.



The response reached far beyond Highmore. Social media quickly filled with messages from neighboring communities asking one simple question: "How can we help?" People who had never met the families affected were offering supplies, equipment, donations, meals, and their time. It was a reminder that even in the hardest moments, kindness has a way of bringing people together.

River Cities Public Transit was honored to play a small role in helping our neighbors during their time of need. We weren't looking for recognition-we were simply answering the call, just as so many others did that day.

THE REAL STORY BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE OF HIGHMORE.

IT'S ABOUT A COMMUNITY THAT REFUSED TO LET TRAGEDY DEFINE IT.

It's about compassion over convenience, service over self, and the reminder that even after the darkest storms, hope can still be found in the kindness of others.

To everyone who answered the call-whether by clearing debris, checking on a neighbor, opening your home, driving a bus, preparing a meal, or simply asking how you could help-thank you.

THIS IS WHAT COMMUNITY LOOKS LIKE.

THIS IS WHAT RESILIENCE LOOKS LIKE.

ON JUNE 29, HIGHMORE REMINDED ALL OF US WHAT THAT LOOKS LIKE.

GET THESE GUYS NOW

Terry Hoffman, Co-Director CTWSI

South Dakota District 5 State Senator Glen Vilhauer is a strong supporter of public transportation and the essential role it plays in our communities.

Meeting with legislators in session is wonderful, but during Transit Provider Association meetings and general discussions with supporters, we are always encouraged to contact your lawmakers year-round. I'd like to say we are actively doing this, but in reality, Sen. Vilhauer contacted Community Transit to set up this latest meeting.

On Friday, July 10, he participated in a ride along with Community Transit in Watertown. During the visit, he and CTWSI Co-Executive Director Terry Hoffman discussed many aspects of public transit operations at the local, regional, and national levels.

Their conversation covered a wide range of topics, including finances, government regulations, vehicle quality, driver shortages, wages, funding sources, communication, training, and the day-to-day challenges of providing reliable transportation services.



They also reviewed local transit statistics, including ridership numbers and the importance of local financial support in maintaining these critical services.

One of the key takeaways from the visit was the importance of legislators learning more about public transportation. He said many of his colleagues in Pierre are surprised to discover just how vital transit services are. Many still believe transit is just for seniors and individuals with disabilities.

“They are surprised to hear about the ridership for youth and those using transit as a means to employment,” said Vilhauer. “It’s amazing how many people rely on transit. It’s because of the safety, dependability and low cost.”

Thank you, Sen. Vilhauer and our other supporters, in the legislature.



Jacque Senger, Executive
Director, DTA

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Tidbit Articles

Please contact me with articles you would like to place in the Transit Tidbit.

Distribute

Please share your Transit Tidbit with your staff and other individuals interested in the Dakota Transit Association.