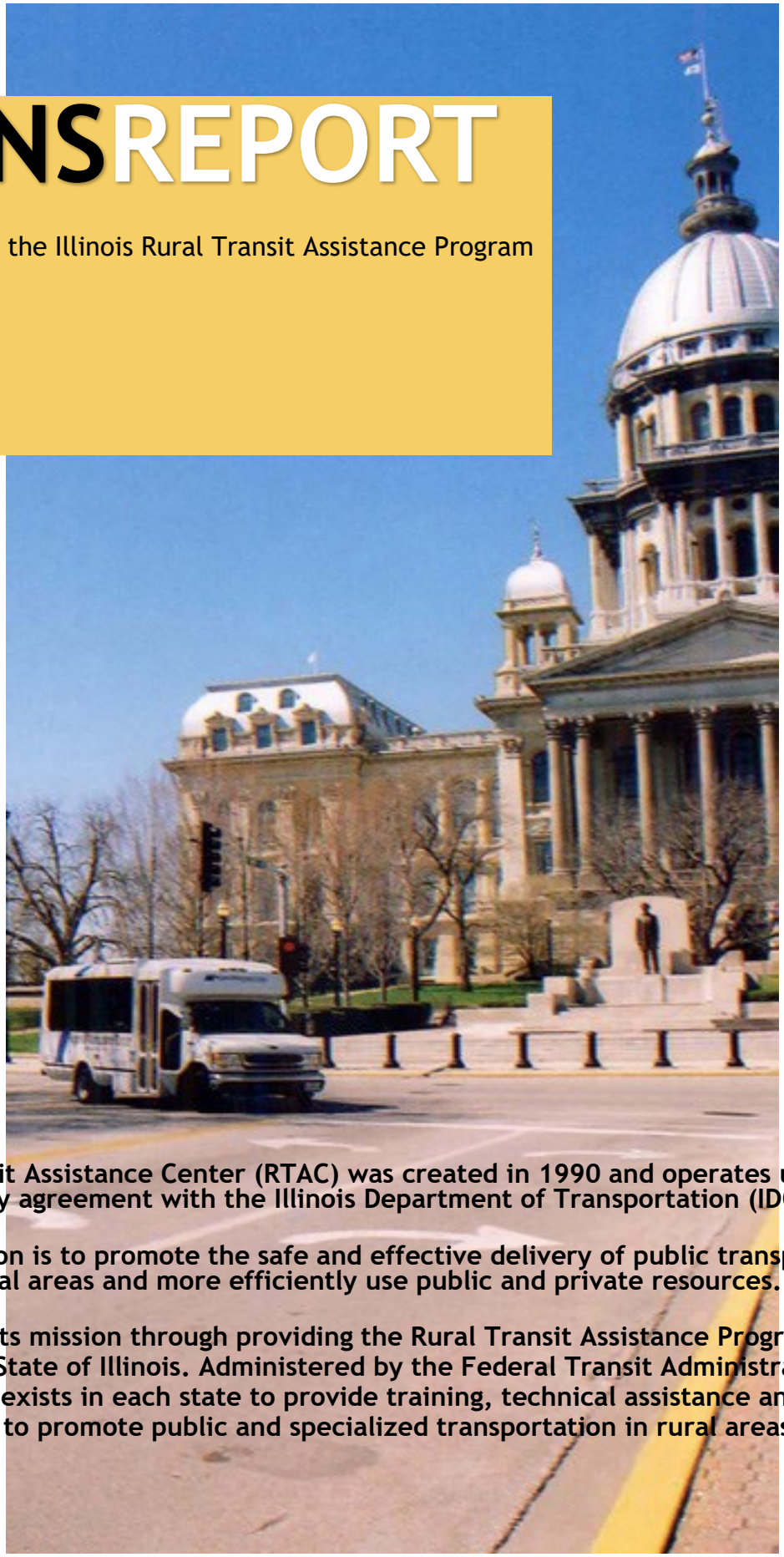
TRANSREPORT

The Newsletter of the Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Program

Summer, 2022



RTAC Staff:

Dave Patton

Mable Kreps

Ed Heflin

Jamie Bainter

The Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) was created in 1990 and operates under an inter-agency agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT).

The RTAC mission is to promote the safe and effective delivery of public transportation in rural areas and more efficiently use public and private resources.

RTAC fulfills its mission through providing the Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) for the State of Illinois. Administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), an RTAP exists in each state to provide training, technical assistance and research, and to promote public and specialized transportation in rural areas.

RTAC Notes

Dave Patton, Director

We are at an interesting and important point in the evolution of mobility – specifically when considering how vehicles will be propelled today and far into the future. After attending the 2022 IPTA Conference in O'Fallon, it was readily apparent that companies interested in propulsion systems are all doing their best to create technology which can satisfy as many needs as possible amongst possible users, while doing battle amongst each other to gain market dominance. In the early 1900s, cars won out in the battle between modes, besting streetcars, bicycles, horses, and pedestrian-power. And gasoline-powered engines won out over electric power as the preferred power source per this story in Anthropocene Magazine. But in those early days, as in the nowadays, gas-powered vehicles weren't necessarily better than electric-powered vehicles, but at some point one competitor wins out thanks to other considerations. The electric grid was just being created and was expensive and urban, mostly. A larger percentage of the population lived in non-urban situations and needed the greater flexibility provided by gasoline/oil vehicles. And, of course, politics and the pressure put on by oil and gas companies who had sizable investments in drilling, transport, refining, and storage won out along with the chance for vehicle manufacturers to build-out their companies. The infrastructure to go along with gas and diesel powered internal combustion engines also had to happen quickly and extensively and it did. The fossil fuel industry was born thanks mostly to transportation, but significant side-developments through the capture of natural gas allowed for better methods of heating buildings. The oil industry spawned many other developments based upon the refining process including jet fuel, asphalt, diesel, heating oil and other chemicals. The list of consumer products that use oil and natural gas and other base petroleum derivatives is amazing and includes over 6000 items. Clearly, we humans may never be able to do without oil. But, not everything has to run on oil and we are at a point where the next dominant technology will emerge.

It feels to me like we are in-between, or a little too early to settle into any, single technology. Typically it seems that with most things in life, one “type” or “preferred creation” takes over and is used and identified as the dominant such thing – sort of like VHS over Beta, or Windows over Linux, etc. When it comes to transportation-power, or even how societies power themselves, I wonder if we won’t actually see a dominant power type? Personally, I hope that is the case.

It seems that the world is varied-enough, with different needs and resources, so that each and every variety of power creation is successful, clean enough, and accepted as part of a diversified energy portfolio. Government plays a significant role, of course, and when it decides to spend tax payer money to move in one direction or another, private money and industry quickly build to take advantage of these decisions. If the US government does build-out tens of thousands of charging stations across the country, that would be a huge boost to electrified transportation – which will be required in order to make the population in general more interested. But for public transportation, especially in urbanized areas, electrifying the fleet just screams out as something that should be done for several reasons. There are many methods to achieve fleet electrification and we should use all of them. Each method (i.e., hydrogen, hybrid fossil/electric, 100-percent electric, propane, onboard-generation of electricity to charge batteries constantly, battery storage versus other forms of energy storage, etc) has merit and different price points and different levels of public subsidization. The entire industry could thrive if we continue to enjoy diversity in power generation. And the use of oil for transportation will continue to decrease. Someday, not too far in the future, most of us will be driving electricity-powered vehicles and won’t think about it twice. How we get there is important. The more we move in this direction, the longer our planet’s easier-to-get-oil and gas will last – giving us the continued ability to create the other thousands of parts of our lives upon which we rely on oil to provide.

Welcome to Jamie Bainter, who has joined the RTAC staff in early September. We look forward to tapping her creativity and skills to keep us going. Jamie’s intro-story is later in this issue. We hope to see a bunch of our rural vehicle maintenance personal and managers at the Fall Maintenance Workshop in Springfield on October 11 – see more about this later in the issue also. The IPTA conference was held September 13-15 in O'Fallon. Following are a few pictures taken by Jamie.

Welcome & State of the Industry

Kent Julian, Live it Forward LLC

Karl Gnadt, President of the Illinois Public Transportation Association and Managing Director Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District

Jeff Nelson, CEO/Managing Director at QC MetroLINK and Chair, American Public Transportation Association

IPTA Welcome Event—St. Louis Cardinal Game

Sherey Zerbian's Retirement

Sherey Zerbian, Director of the Grundy Transit System

For many years, Grundy County had only a 5311 grant, and one bus. Starting with her position at the Grundy County Community Foundation, Sherey Zerbian took on the lead position in the county's effort to complete the primer process and obtain a Downstate Operating Assistance Grant for Grundy County. The efforts were successful, and once the grant was awarded, the position of Transit Director was offered to Sherey, which she accepted in 2011.

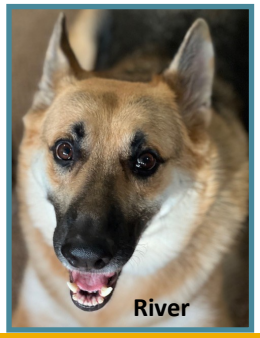
After several years with outside providers, the decision was made in 2018 to bring the service in house. Since that time, the Grundy Transit System has experienced steady growth, and has become a vital part of the Grundy County community.

From the beginning, the GTS has been housed in the Grundy County Highway Building, but is now outgrowing the available space. With the award of a Rebuild II grant, the GTS will begin construction on a new Transit Center building in the fall of 2022. The Center will house the buses, and include office space for the administrative staff of the GTS.

After eleven years as the Director, Zerbian's plans include sleeping past 5:00 a.m. in the morning, spending time with her grandchildren, and travel with her husband Dave.

RTAC Hires New Program Coordinator

Jamie Bainter comes to us after spending the last 5 years as a revenue cycle specialist at McDonough District Hospital. She has a Bachelors degree in Healthcare Administration and is currently finishing up her MBA at WIU. Jamie will take over responsibility at RTAC for the Annual Paratransit Roadeo and the production of this *Transreport* newsletter, including performing interviews and general content generation. She will assist in most other RTAC work also, especially with maintenance and support of the lending library, working with our trainers and with TAPTCO online driver training administration, and becoming expert in Medicaid funding for transportation in order to provide technical assistance for this subject. When she is not at work She likes watching sports, traveling, spending time with family, and enjoys hanging out with her two German Shepherds.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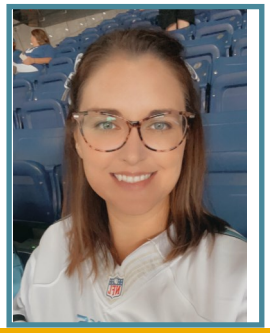

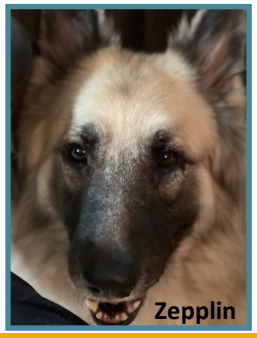
Zepplin

West Central Mass Transit District Hires Two New Administrative Staff

August 8, 2022 (Jacksonville, Illinois) -- West Central Mass Transit District Board of Directors is looking to the future by hiring two capable skilled employees to newly created positions to keep it on track to meet the needs of the six counties it serves. After an extensive year-long search the Board has hired Assistant Director Debra Walters and Finance Director Tiffanee Peters.

Debra Walters—Assistant Director

Both women officially joined the staff in newly created positions in July to round out the staff which serves a six-county demand-response public transportation agency in West-Central Illinois.

Walters, a graduate of Illinois College, brings more than twelve years of experience in organizational management, business administration and social services. She joins WCMTD after serving this past year as social service director/Medicaid specialist at Heritage Health. Her extensive financial and operations experience includes six years at Morgan County Housing Authority which will be of immense assistance in her new position of assistant director. As assistant director Walters will be supporting Executive Director Jean Jumper in administering the corporate policy while overseeing the day-to-day operations of West Central Mast Transit District.

Walters is currently learning the operations through hands-on experience from the ground up with the assistance of staff in different areas including operations, safety and security, and human resources. With this training she will gain proficiency in all aspects of the operations and appreciate the operation from all perspectives which will provide her a well-rounded understanding of the organization.

Peters also joins WCMTD, with twelve years of financial and administrative experience gained through various positions that will add to the efficiency of the administrative staff.

Her financial background will be a valuable asset in the administration of all state and federal financial reporting responsibilities, allowing Jumper to continue to focus on agency growth and increasing opportunities for additional transportation opportunities in the 6-county area.

Tiffanee Peters—Finance Director

Peters comes to WCMTD after serving as administrator/treasurer for the Village of South Jacksonville. She has experience preparing and managing an annual budget, generating and ensuring accuracy of financial reports, accounts payable, accounts receivable, personnel reports and more. She also has years of administrator experience with Community Living Options/DD Homes Network in Cass County. Her qualifications bring added strength to the organization in the newly created finance director position.

Jumper says, “This is an exciting time for WCMTD. The agency has been working to position itself to successfully navigate the changing dynamics of today’s reality and the addition of these two individuals in the new positions will greatly assist in the necessary growth and transitions we have identified as necessary for the provision of enhanced services that will benefit the service area. Both Ms. Walters and Ms. Peters are blending in nicely with the existing staff and are already hard at work in their new positions.”

Board President, Tom Atkins, noted that the Executive Search Committee was delighted to find agreement with these two highly qualified individuals. “This secures our planning and desired organization concepts. The Board of Directors is enthusiastic about the future of WCMTD and its well-rounded and qualified staff that can continue to lead the organization into the future. “

WCMTD provides demand-response public transportation services to all residents and visitors of the six-county service area in west central Illinois including Morgan, Cass, Schuyler, Brown, Pike and Scott counties. West Central Mass Transit District’s mission is to provide safe, reliable, timely, and affordable public transportation to residents and visitors of all ages and abilities. Connecting people and businesses with opportunity to help all grow, prosper and move about the area with ease.

Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD) to Begin Transportation Pilot Paratransit Service with City of Washington

On August 1, 2022, the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD) is introduced a six-month pilot paratransit service in the City of Washington for their underserved urban area. The project is partially funded by section 5310 Transportation Assistance Grant Program from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT). The City of Washington and Washington Township are also helping to fund this project. The GPMTD paratransit service, CityLift, will be operating this service for individuals aged 18 to 59 based on their mobility challenges and disability. To read more about pilot paratransit service click here.

Word Search

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Find the following words in the puzzle.
Words are hidden ↑ ↓ → ← and ↘ .

APPORTIONMENT
BUS STOP
COMMUTE
FACILITIES
HEADWAY
LINKED TRIP
MASS TRANSIT
OPERATING COSTS
PASSENGER MILES
RIDERSHIP
SENIORS
VARIABLE COST

Piattran Celebrates 40 Years of Public Transportation with Community Celebration

MONTICELLO, IL (May 23, 2022) – Piatt County Public Transportation (Piattran) is celebrating its 40th anniversary by hosting a free community celebration event on Saturday, June 11th from 10AM to 1PM in Downtown Monticello. The celebration will feature family-friendly games, food and refreshments from Eddie's Sweet Island food truck and Kona Ice, prizes, giveaways, bus tours, and more.

"We are thrilled to celebrate this incredible milestone and reaffirm our commitment to making public transportation in Piatt County affordable and accessible for members of our community," said Piattran director Jami Trybom. "We are an organization that values our employees, riders, and our community and we've always prioritized that. As a thank you and to show our gratitude, we'd like to give back to Piatt County by hosting a fun community celebration!"

Founded in 1982, Piattran has become an integral part of our community, providing more than 30,000 rides per year.

"In October 2019, we celebrated our millionth rider," said Trybom. "We've grown to offer daily round trips connecting Piatt County with our surrounding communities. From medical appointments, errands, group trips, and more, if you've got somewhere to go, we'll help you get there."

For more information on Piattran's Anniversary Celebration, please visit Piattran on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ridepiattran or online at www.piattran.org.

FY 2022 RTAC Classroom Driver Training

RTAC is pleased to provide to your agency this year's classroom driver training program. The RTAC trainers have created new true/false and multiple choice question tests for Defensive Driving, Emergency Procedures, Passenger Assistance, and an optional Passenger Emergencies training. Each of the written tests relates to the corresponding on-site training. All of the driver training classroom material will soon be available at http://www.iira.org/rtac/resources/

Also, please visit our website to view the library items that correlate with the four trainings.

How to proceed:

1. Have each driver take the written tests—these tests are not just for new drivers, but for everyone.
2. Fill out the sign-in sheet, which signifies that your drivers have taken the written tests. At the end of August 2022, RTAC will submit to IDOT-OIPI a listing of each agency that has completed the written tests/on-site training, broken down by employee name and which tests and on-site trainings the employee completed.
3. Call/email RTAC to schedule the on-site trainings: Mable Kreps at 309.298.2141 or MR-Kreps@wiu.edu
4. Mail, email, or fax (309.298.2162) the sign-in sheet(s) for the tests and on-site trainings to RTAC. Please do not send us the completed tests.

Here is what to expect during the on-site trainings:

Defensive Driving: The course focuses on driving techniques that will enable transit drivers to drive in a more defensive manner. It addresses issues such as stopping distance, field of vision, vehicle controls, speed management, and vehicle inspections.

Emergency Procedures: Focuses on emergency preparedness (safety checks the driver should conduct before leaving on the trip and types of emergency equipment that should be on the vehicle) and on procedures to follow in case of an actual emergency (evacuation of passengers, first aid, etc.).

Passenger Assistance: In addition to explaining proper securement of wheelchairs, use of the wheelchair lift, and various ways to physically assist passengers, this course also addresses sensitivity issues and the best way to communicate with people with disabilities, manual operation of the lift in case of mechanical failure, as well as a customer service component.

Passenger Emergencies: Topics discussed will include the types of passenger emergencies, effective communication, how to be proactive, and how to respond to a variety of passenger emergencies.

If you have any questions, please email or contact Mable at 309.298.2141 or MR-Kreps@wiu.edu

RTAC Announces the following training:

Workplace Safety for Transit Operations

The Springfield Regional Maintenance Center, the Springfield Mass Transit District, and the Illinois Rural Transit Assistance Center at Western Illinois University are pleased to announce a workshop on

> ***workplace safety for transit operations*.** Bus operators tend to focus safety efforts on drivers and vehicle operation, since these transportation components comprise the most frequent and obvious risk. However, workplace safety injury risks should receive appropriate attention since their outcomes can be just as costly as vehicular incidents. This course will explore transit-specific workplace safety topics, focusing primarily on maintenance shop operations. Topics will include a review of regulatory framework, common shop safety issues, and maintaining a safe workplace for employees.

The presenter for this workshop is Mr. Matt Daecher, the President of Daecher Consulting Group. Matt and his company and staff specialize in safety, risk assessment and accident reconstruction. We have not had any similar presentations for a long time and the topics are timely.

Bring your questions and discussion issues to the workshop, or if you prefer, please feel free to email any questions which you would like discussed to dc-patton@wiu.edu ahead of time, and we will work to prepare answers and ideas.

The program date is Tuesday, October 11, 2022 at the Springfield Mass Transit District (RMTD) facility at 928 S. 9th Street, Springfield, IL 62703. Please call Spencer Sidwell, Superintendent of Maintenance, at 217-747-1254 for questions or directions. In-lot parking is limited next to the Admin building, but there is plenty of on-street parking west of the facility. Registration, with coffee, donuts, and snacks provided, will start at 8:30 a.m. The workshop is from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Please call RTAC at 309-298-2141 or email MR-Kreps@wiu.edu to register. There is no registration fee.

RTAC Offers TAPTCO Online Training!

RTAC has partnered with TAPTCO to provide online driver training. For over 30 years, the experts at TAPTCO Transit & Paratransit Company have been designing award-winning bus driver training programs with specialties that include fleet operations and safety, industrial psychology, instructional design, and media production. This breakthrough series of safety video programs and study guides for bus driver training are designed by our team of performance improvement experts with specialties that include fleet operations and safety, industrial psychology, instructional design, and media production.

This training, the Paratransit Operator Development Course, is widely used across the nation, and in an online form, is highly appropriate for training new drivers and refreshing experienced paratransit personnel. All Illinois Section 5311 grantees and operators are eligible for this free training, with Section 5310 providers on a secondary basis. The best way to take advantage of this online resource is to have an agency's training manager (or whoever holds this duty) send RTAC each trainee's name, and email address, and RTAC will set-up an account for that trainee, and send a return email to the trainee with a username and password. At present, in order to use the online system, each trainee must have a unique email address. If a trainee does not/will not have an email address, we can work around that. Each trainee will be able to access his/her account and step through the 33 training courses and quizzes. Agency training managers will be able to see each student's progress and when the course is completed, print out a certificate. Certificates may be printed at the end of each course, if desired. Some agencies are placing these certificates into each trainee's personnel file.

RTAC is taking registrations — please write Dave Patton at dc-patton@wiu.edu

RTAC FYI

If you're new(er) to rural transit, make sure to surf over to the National RTAP website and check-out the newly updated Transit Manager's Toolkit. This is a fantastic and comprehensive manual which explains almost everything you could need to know, from working with Boards, to understanding federal regulations, to operations and planning.

The document is 179 pages.

SAVE THE DATE

2023 RTAC Spring Conference

March 7-8, 2023

The Northfield Center - Springfield, IL

IPTA
ILLINOIS PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ASSOCIATION

IL RTAP Advisory Council

Jean Jumper, West Central IL MTD, Chair

Adam Lach, Rides MTD, Vice-Chair

Open, Dept. on Aging

Sarah Nollman-Hodge, South Central IL MTD

Sherry Hicks, FAYCO, Inc.

Kim Zimmerman, North Central Area Transit

Morgan Lewis, Warren County PCOM

Cheryl Shutt, Coles County Council on Aging

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RTAC Website: www.iira.org/rtac/

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Our mailing address is:

Rural Transit Assistance Center, Stipes Hall 318, 1 University Circle, Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL 61455

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