

**Presentation by James Moench  
North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium**

Thank you to UGPTI and SURTC and the organizers of these workshops. John---Gene---

My history

UGPTI Advisory Board chairman - 12 years

SURTC Advisory Board

Who is NDDAC

When and what do we Americans think about transportation?

Birthright

Able-bodied and working – Non issue

Afterthought---After the fact fix to problems–

Grain industry and unit trains

People with disabilities and the aged - who may be the same person

Persons WD are the largest minority in ND

14% of ND over age of 5 has a disability

Some 83,000 ND citizens

29.4 % for persons age 65-74

47% for person over age 75

Whether they stay in their small rural town or farm home or move to the “big city”—they stress the transportation system. In the rural setting, it seems to be less people, but with greater needs and at greater distances.

### **Low density –Higher Cost per ride**

In the urban setting, the need is for more routes, expanded times – evenings and weekends, better trained drivers, and updated, accessible, equipment. **More density, but difficulty using fixed routes in a timely manner.**

People need reliable transportation to live their lives for work, medical, spiritual, social, friendship, shopping, or maintaining family activities and contacts

**Daily living activities that we all need to do and most of us take for granted**

*(Exercise –Introduce the nearest stranger to you)*

Just look at working—paying taxes and being a contributing member of their community. In 52.6 % of persons with a disability work, that is the highest in the nation. 87.2 % for persons without a disability, which is also the highest in the nation. In order to maintain that standing, and I think we want to, they requires services like timely transportation to and from work. Just look at the need for more employees and the potential, 14.4 % of persons with disabilities who do not work are currently actively seeking employment. Everywhere I go, I see “Help Wanted” signs in the windows of businesses. Let’s put these potential employers and employees together. The hours of greatest ridership are from 8am to 9am and from 4pm to 5pm. If the bus only runs from 8 to 5, that should be telling us something. What if you are offered a job from 8 to 5, you have a transportation problem.

In order to receive medical services, patients need to be able to schedule appointments and be on time keeping those appointments. Medical service providers constantly testify at the legislature that the major reason they don’t take new

Medicaid patients is not being able to rely on them being on time for appointments. PWD tell me that a major reason for that reputation is the difficulty in scheduling reliable transportation services.

Every meeting on disability issues invariable turns to transportation. Everybody has a horror story, but solutions are few. More hours, more routes, more choices, better equipped vehicles, more drivers, etc **mostly more Money!!**

DOT is launchings a new structure– regional concept

Why? Need for communication and coordination

Costs make duplication insane – a city bus being followed by a school bus followed by a lift van by a student in a POV alone

Concept has merit on its surface, but the devil is in the details

Partnerships in funding – fares even if increased dramatically will not fund public transportation alone. Need city, county, state and national components. **Highway funding for transit**

**must be increased not decreased.** It is an investment in the future.

Transit needs to sit at the table with all the transportation sectors when priorities are selected and when coalitions are formed to advocate for transportation issues. When plans are made for community expansions, public transit must be considered in the mix.

We need to move food, fiber, and all manner of people efficiently for this nation and especially North Dakota to grow and prosper. In order to tell that story effectively, there is a crying need to more, accurate, scientifically collected and analyzed data. Once obtained and processed that information needs to be communicated to decision-makers to make the case for keeping our transportation infrastructure world class.

Let me outline what I see as the some immediate **Goals and Objectives** for our ND transit system.

1. Provide reliable transportation services

- a. Maintain on time performance to meet published schedules
  - b. Coordinate transportation services among all of the service providers
2. Provide convenient transportation services
    - a. Provide schedules that meet demand
    - b. Increase coverage area
    - c. Provide public access to transit information
    - d. Provide a transit system that allows reasonable travel times
    - e. Maintain affordable passenger fares
3. Provide comfortable transportation services
    - a. Provide well maintained and clean vehicles
    - b. Provide drivers that are courteous and knowledgeable
    - c. Ensure the safety of passengers
  4. Maintain efficient transportation services
    - a. Increase ridership
    - b. Decrease cost per ride provided
    - c. Make maximum use of equipment and facilities

Lastly, let me commend this forum and its organizers and sponsors. Again, I wish to thank UGPTI and SURTC for taking the lead in gathering the needed data and doing the analytical work. The relationships, teamwork, and communication these

workshops are helping build are key elements as we come to the joint realization that we are in this economy together (whether Persons WD or without). **Sound transportation systems management and continued strategic investment in an adequate transportation infrastructure will play a significant role in preserving, enhancing, and even determining North Dakota's future quality of life.**

Thank you and I look forward to the rest of the program.