

The Transit Lane

Small Urban & Rural Transit Center • North Dakota State University
PO Box 5074 • Fargo, North Dakota 58105 • 701.231.7767
www.surtc.org

Vol. 3, Issue 2

Fall / Winter 2005

SURTC Advisory Board Meeting

SURTC's annual Advisory Board meeting on Sept. 14 featured praise for the center's programs, optimism over increased funding for transit nationally and concern over adapting to the demands of that funding.

The ideas expressed will be important as the center plans its research, education and outreach programs for the coming year. "The board meeting is an opportunity for us to take stock of our programs and direction," noted SURTC director Jill Hough. "We listen carefully to what our board members have to say and make program adjustments accordingly. It's an important part of keeping our efforts focused and relevant."

Much of the feedback at the board meeting was positive, beginning with opening comments by North Dakota Department of Transportation director Dave Sprynczynatyk.

Ron Hynes, Deputy Associate Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration, praised SURTC's "highly professional approach to university outreach, education and technical sharing. You have a carefully planned research agenda with stakeholder involvement and support that you've developed in consultation with the FTA."

Chris Zeilinger, Assistant Director for Governmental Affairs and Training for the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) also praised SURTC's work. "The work that's been done here really is national in scope and impact. You are setting the stage for small urban and rural transit across America."

"The work that those of us in community transportation have always done, providing demand response service to the elderly and handicapped, is now becoming state-of-the-art for large urban transit systems," he noted.



Zeilinger noted that funding for transit grew at twice the rate of highway spending under the new transportation bill. “The work organizations like SURTC are doing is going to be even more important.”

A challenge for small urban and rural transit agencies will be finding local funds to meet the required match for federal funding formulas. The legislation also calls for greater accountability from transit agencies, requiring them to develop formal transportation plans and document their decision-making process.

“For many of these agencies, decisions are made very informally,” Zeilinger noted. “Given the requirements and accountability that accompany these new funds, it might be a job for SURTC to figure out what kind of decision-making processes work best for transit agencies in rural America.”

Alan Abeson, of Easter Seals’ Project Action noted that increased coordination among transit providers will be key in the future. That means greater coordination between education and transportation. Other issues will be an increased demand for a more fully accessible pedestrian environment.

Abeson also noted that training for transit managers will become an increasingly important issue, particularly for paratransit managers. Those managers will be in greater demand as paratransit agencies grow and urban transit agencies expand their paratransit operations.

Carol Wright, executive director of James River Transit in Jamestown and president of the Dakota Transit Association concurred with Abeson that efforts to improve coordination would continue to be key to improving mobility and using funding more efficiently. Her transit agency is increasing its mobility coordination with other local agencies as a result of a statewide study conducted on coordination by SURTC for the North Dakota DOT.

“What we’re doing is a direct result of the statewide coordination study. It’s an example of what can happen when you take data out of a larger study and apply it locally,” she said.

Jackie Mattheis, a transportation specialist with the South Dakota DOT, also cited coordination as a key issue. She also noted that a challenge for small transit agencies was

the increasing size of buses. “We’re working with transit providers to look for ways to cut costs and boost the number of riders,” she said.

In Montana, transit providers petitioned the Public Service Commission and removed some regulatory barriers to coordination, reported Lyn Hellegaard, director of the Missoula Ravalli Transportation Management Authority and a member of the Montana Transit Association.

She reported that the association is working with the CTAA to assess and address transit issues on the state’s Indian reservations and with the national park service to address transit within national parks as well as finding ways to use transit equipment that is underutilized during the parks’ off season.

“Coordination is not just a byword in Wyoming.

If you don’t coordinate, you don’t have any service at all,” says Sean Solan of the Wyoming DOT. “We have contracts to provide service for various agencies. We have a philosophy: If we miss an opportunity to provide one ride, we’re not doing our job.”

Keven Anderson of the Minnesota DOT noted that transit funding in

Minnesota was a rural-urban struggle with rural systems competing for attention and funds against high-volume systems in the Twin Cities. He noted the challenges the DOT has in dealing with county and tribal governments in planning. “In our district in northwestern Minnesota, all of our transportation issues are a series of coordination issues. It’s a matter of getting the right people at the table.”

Ron Baumgart, past president of the Dakota Transit Association and executive director of River Cities Transit in Pierre, S.D. said transit providers will be challenged to be good stewards of the increased funding under the new highway bill. “For years we’ve told legislators we could do so much more if we had the money. Now we have to prove it,” he says.

Bruce Fuchs, transit manager for the North Dakota DOT, said he is confident that most local agencies are up to that task. “In North Dakota we’re shifting from a program of control. We need to become an enabler. We get people the money to do the things they need to do and then let them get the job done.”

“Partnerships are really critical to us. They’re part of what makes us successful. SURTC has allowed us to do our job more efficiently and effectively. It is a resource we call on quite frequently.”



In Utah that means cooperating to help school districts provide transportation as budgets shrink and enrollment increases, according to Ryan Marshall, president of the Utah Urban Rural Specialized Transportation Association. He also noted the state was devoting more funding to transit as a new statewide sales tax initiative included in a transit measure.

Tom Steyaert of the Montana Department of Transportation echoed concerns about local agencies' ability to find local matching funds. "We are seeing new ways of getting funds out there. The challenge will be getting the match."

"The future is filled with both opportunities and challenges related to new funding nationally for transit," notes Hough. "Small urban and rural transit agencies are united by the challenges they face in serving a widely dispersed clientele with very limited resources. Our job at SURTC is to help those agencies find innovative ways to most efficiently take advantage of funding opportunities to improve service to their clientele."

New Members Named to SURTC Advisory Board

The SURTC Advisory Board has added several new members. "The new members indicate an expansion of the states that we serve and bring viewpoints to the board that will improve our long-term vision and help us better connect with various segments of the transit industry," says director Jill Hough.



Ryan Marshall is president of the Utah Urban Rural Specialized Transportation Association. He is the Public Works Services Administrator for the City of St. George, Utah and is responsible for the transportation divisions for the city which include the streets division, the fleet division and SunTran, the city's public transportation system.

Art Bowen is vice president of the Utah Urban Rural Specialized Transportation Association. He is regional manager of the Utah Transit Authority's Mount Ogden Business Unit and has worked at UTA for 29 years. He oversees bus operations, maintenance, administration and customer service.



Alan Abeson is executive director of EasterSeals Project ACTION. Funded through a cooperative agreement with the Federal Transportation Administration, Project ACTION promotes cooperation between the transportation industry and the disability community to increase mobility for people with disabilities under the ADA and beyond. The program offers training and technical assistance and other resources. Before becoming executive director in 2002, Abeson was executive director of the Arc of the United States, headquartered in Arlington, Texas. While living in Arlington, he served as chair of the Special Transit Advisory Board and was an advocate for the establishment of city-wide public transit.



SURTC Funding Increases Under New Transportation Bill

SURTC will receive \$4 million in funding over the next four years under the new federal transportation bill passed by congress this summer.

"The funding represents an endorsement of the work we've been doing," says SURTC director Jill Hough. "The new funding means we will be able to truly regionalize our programs."

The funding is part of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation signed on Aug. 10 by President George W. Bush. SAFETEA-LU authorizes the federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009.

Hough says the basic thrust of SURTC's research, educational and training efforts will not change. "We will, however, be able to expand them and take a broader view." The center's advisory board will provide key input on that expansion, she notes.

SURTC was established in May of 2002 through an initial appropriation of \$400,000 through the Federal Transit Administration. The Center has seen significant growth in the number and depth of its programs attracting more than \$500,000 in contracts and grants in the past year.



Preparing for the Next Generation. . .



Dale Marsico, Executive Director
Community Transportation
Association

At our Community Transportation EXPO in St. Louis there was an interesting Community Transportation Association Board of Directors Meeting that included FTA Administrator Jennifer Dorn. In the past, these sessions have focused on issues and concerns of mutual interest like regulations, important legislation, coordination, and how we can work to improve transportation services by working together. This meeting took a different turn that focused more attention on the future of smaller transit organizations and providers, especially those in Rural America. Part of this discussion was driven by the overall progress of reauthorization legislation and associated expansion of transit this legislation would provide especially to those small urban and rural transit systems.

In many ways the transportation industry's future and the nation's future have a lot in common. For instance, we're challenged by the need to increase the skills of those who work for us so we can utilize new technology in our workplace that will allow all of us to do our work smarter and more efficiently. We're challenged in competition for new employees in a competitive financial environment where skilled individuals can do better financially. And we're affected by an issue that is at the top of our agenda as transportation providers and advocates as well as managers and employers, an aging society.

America's aging society takes on a special significance for rural and small urban transit providers. Our sector of this industry is by far the newest. Rural and small urban transit has been with us in some form for many years but it has seen significant growth beginning in the late 1970's. It has expanded thanks to the support given it in major national transportation strategies first developed as part of the ISTEA and TEA 21. SAFETEA-LU, the subject of that discussion between the Community Transportation Board members and FTA Administrator Dorn, further expands these commitments and investments.

Along with the contributions made by our state and local partners there will be stronger demands for more services built on the successful efforts many communities of our nation now enjoy. Unlike other aspects of the transportation community, many of the men and women who invented this part of the transportation business are still running it. All

of us know people who started some rural or community transportation agency or providers who have been there through this period of development and refinement that have now reached the point where they are either retiring or moving on to some other challenge. I don't think I've been to a transportation meeting in the last three years where we weren't discussing someone retiring from a local transportation organization or, for that matter, a state transportation agency or department.

How we meet this challenge will directly affect the future of our sector of the industry as well as the services many of us will need as we join the ranks of millions who will just need a ride to maintain their place in their community.

Many of us have been fortunate to have enjoyed good relationships with local educational institutions as part of our overall work. When I was a transportation provider I was lucky to participate in a number of academically based internship programs that brought many well-qualified young people to our organization. We often provided the on-the-ground connections and experience that gave them an opportunity to put into practice what they learned in finance, planning, human resources, education, and management. At the Community Transportation Association in Washington, we're also lucky to have excellent opportunities to work with respected local institutions that provide similar, very qualified students needing the practical experience we can offer to help them make their first meaningful real-world connections.

Our partners in rural and small urban transit community need similar relationships. And, although many of them enjoy relationships similar to those I've mentioned here, many of them do not. Even those who do, probably don't have a relationship with an academically based program or institution that focuses on rural and small urban transit in the way the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center at NDSU does.

There is a need to develop a network of institutions that could connect small urban and rural transit providers to both a series of educational opportunities like those offered by NDSU and a strong internship program focusing on rural and small urban transit. Such a combination of academic work and practical experience would go a long way in helping to create the next generation of transit leaders. A university affiliation provides an added sense of importance to any profession. In the growing sector represented by small urban and rural transit, such a relationship helps us compete for the best minds of the next generation.



Our center at NDSU is the best place for us to explore and establish this effort to assure we always remain the *newest* sector of our nation's transportation industry. The experience and commitment of the SURTC staff is equal to our own as well as the challenge the future brings to us and to the next generation.

MAT Breaks Ground for New Facility

Julie Bommelman
Transit Administrator
City of Fargo



On Sept. 8, the cities of Fargo and Moorhead broke ground for construction of a new maintenance and storage facility for Metro Area Transit (MAT) vehicles. At the ground breaking ceremony, Mayors Bruce Furness (Fargo) and Mark Voxland (Moorhead), and Dave Leftwitch, local government engineer with the N.D. Department of Transportation, spoke about the significance of such a joint venture project and the benefits to the citizens.

Architects for the new facility are EAPC of Fargo; the general contractor is Roers Construction, Fargo. Construction will take an estimated 14 months, with a projected completion date of November 1, 2006.

The new facility will be located in Fargo across the street from the existing bus facility and Fargo Public Works (at the site of the old Consolidated Freight facility). The facility,

which will be approximately 50,000 square feet, will hold 37 buses and the Fargo-Moorhead MAT administrative offices. There will also be room for expansion to hold up to 50 buses. Discussions with the Fargo Senior Commission and Clay County Rural Transit about utilizing the new facility are on-going.

Currently, the cities of Fargo and Moorhead have separate facilities for bus storage and maintenance. The new facility will allow the Fargo and Moorhead systems to combine storage and maintenance. Plans call for combining the two systems completely, but jurisdictional and technical issues must be worked out before completely uniting the systems.

The estimated cost for the facility is \$7 million. Federal funds will cover 80 percent of the costs. Fargo will pay two-thirds and Moorhead one-third of the remaining costs. Funding was secured over the course of the past few years with the support of Senators and Congressional representatives in both North Dakota and Minnesota.

The N.D. and Minn. Departments of Transportation have been intricately involved in this process and have both strongly supported the efforts to combine operations in one facility. Without the support of both states, reaching the goal of one facility would have been much more challenging.

This represents a joint effort supported by the cities of Fargo and Moorhead, as well as the states of North Dakota and Minnesota. Our aspirations are for a seamless, efficient system for our passengers and long-term efficiencies for the cities (*more photos on page 6.*)





Elected Officials (left to right): Joan Carlson, Rep. Pomeroy's Office; Mike Williams and Linda Coates, Fargo City Commissioners; Mayor Bruce Furness, Fargo; Mayor Mark Voxland, Moorhead; Pam Gulleason, Senator Dorgan's Office.



Staff (left to right): Jim Gilmour, Julie Bommelman, Pat Zavoral, Harold Pedersen – Fargo; Lori Van Beek, Chad Martin – Moorhead.

Events Calendar

MPTA - 31st Annual Conference

October 24-26 • Bloomington, MN

TRB - 85th Annual Meeting

January 22-26, 2006 • Washington, DC

APTA – Transportation & University Communities Conference

March 18-21, 2006 • East Lansing, MI

TRF - 2006 Annual Forum

March 23-25, 2006 • New York, NY

APTA - 2006 Bus & Paratransit Conference

April 30-May 1, 2006 • Anaheim, CA

ITS America 2006 Annual Meeting & Expo

May 7-9, 2006 • Philadelphia, PA

CTAA - EXPO 2006

June 4-9, 2006 • Orlando, FL

SURTC Spring Training • "Finding Local Match"

(date to be determined)

Please check www.surtc.org for updates



Wyoming's State of Transit

Sean F. Solan, Director
Wind River Transportation Authority

Of Wyoming, a former governor once said, "We're a whole bunch of little towns spread across vast distances and connected by ribbons of highways." Providing public and community transportation in Wyoming, with its vast grasslands, mountains and sparse population, presents a unique set of challenges.

The primary role for public transit is to remove all barriers to mobility, regardless. In Wyoming, scarcity is more than a barrier. Sometimes it can be an expensive proposition. It is easier and less expensive to fill up one vehicle in a metropolitan area than it can be to retrieve one passenger in a rural setting.

In Wyoming, about 66,000 persons are dependant upon public transit. Last year Wyoming transit agencies provided 2,051,908 one-way rides for those persons. Even in a sparsely populated state, that is a lot of need. In fact, during 2004 Wyoming public transit providers logged 504,704 rides for education, 170,961 for personal reasons, 106,412 for nutrition, 92,114 for employment, 79,690 for social reasons, and 1,031,504 for other reasons. This composite of rider types are from Head Start, public health, vocational rehabilitation, Medical/Medicaid, etc.

A recent transit study revealed the average cost of a door-to-door ride in Wyoming is around \$5. The local match is \$1.26, FTA's match is 47 cents, and WYDOT pays 79 cents. That leaves a considerable shortfall or unfunded match of \$2.48. This shortfall must be faced, while utilizing creative means such as senior centers putting on bake or rummage sales and using trust account revenues from patrons. The last resort would be begging from the local governments.

Concerns:

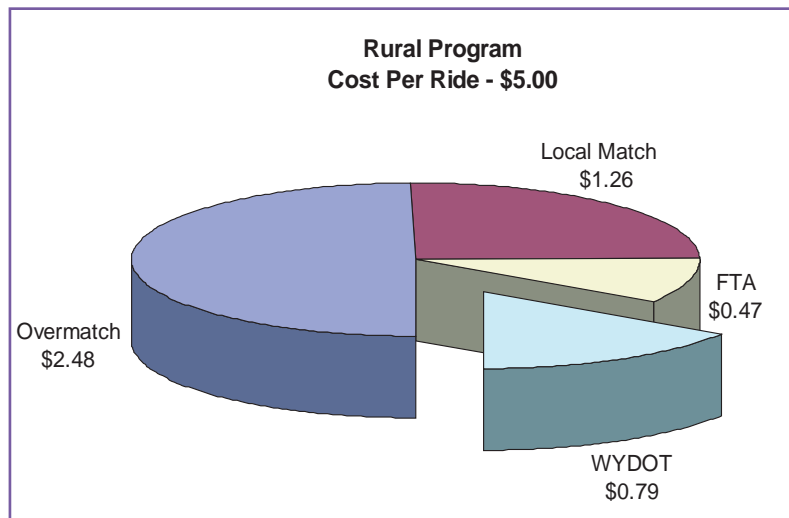
- Rider demand is increasing an average of 12.25 percent per year. Transit agency costs are increasing by 25 percent per ride.
- 85 percent of transit providers need more funding. The match ratios need to be re-aligned.
- Local match ratios have been declining in the past few years.
- Unfunded mandates such as drug and alcohol testing and DOT physicals.

Solutions:

- Coordinated transportation service with human service agencies.
- A statewide dedicated source of local match.
- Public support for public transit.
- More funding for operating budgets including the purchase of new vehicles.
- Continued improvement in performance indicators by transit providers.

There are many benefits to supporting public transit: continued and expanded service, access to jobs, college and schools, improved safety, reduced energy consumption, reduced traffic congestion, added economic development and enhanced mobility routines, as well as potential for emergency evacuations.

The future of Wyoming public transit is a commitment to all citizens with special emphasis on the disadvantaged. Public transit is an essential service and must be allowed to survive all types of restrictions, infractions and, most of all, indifference.



Research

Researchers Meet with Representatives from Bus Industry

SURTC researchers met with representatives from the bus industry in Dallas Sept. 29 to gather ideas and input for a study of small bus manufacturers. The meeting was held at the conclusion of the American Public Transportation Administration annual EXPO.

“We had a small group, but the members had excellent input,” noted Del Peterson, the SURTC researcher directing the effort. “Our goal was to bring together manufacturers and transit representatives to form an advisory committee. That group will help narrow the focus of our study and define our research.” SURTC director Jill Hough and affiliate researcher Jim Miller are assisting in the research.

The eight-member group that met in Dallas included Barbara Sisson, Associate Administrator for Research, Demonstration and Innovation in the Federal Transit Administration. The FTA is funding the research.

Peterson says the next step is to begin collecting data on trends and changes in the bus manufacturing industry. “We want to develop a picture of where the industry has come from and where it is now. With the mergers and changes that have occurred, that picture is very complicated,” he says.

Transit providers in suburban areas, small cities and rural areas rely on small buses and vans to provide mobility to their customers. From 1995 to 2001 the Federal Transit Administration helped fund more than 50,000 vehicles and more than 26 percent of those were buses smaller than 30 feet long. More than 35 percent were vans and other small vehicles used for rural and specialized transportation services.

Transit agencies are concerned about the health of the manufacturing industry because of potential impacts on the availability and quality of buses, costs, loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs and the inability of weak firms to conduct research and development and adopt new technology.

“The supply chain for small transit vehicles has not received the same attention as that of the larger vehicles though it shares many of the same issues,” Peterson notes. “In addition to the issues faced by large bus manufacturers, small bus and van suppliers face unique challenges because of the relatively small size of individual orders and the large number of competitors.”



The 18-month study will look at the financial health of the industry and examine bus purchasing trends of the last 20 years. It will also examine FTA and local procurement policies and their impact on the manufacturing industry. The study will evaluate the impact of other laws and regulations, especially the Clean Air Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act and Buy America requirements.

The study will attempt to identify incentives to adopting new technologies and the impact that standardization of bus specifications would have on production efficiency and cost. Other factors that will be studied include excess capacity in the industry and competition and subsidies.

Transit Risk Financing Study Complete

As a result of concerns expressed during the 2004 SURTC Advisory Board meeting, SURTC researcher Gary Hegland has assembled a report on insurance options for small urban and rural transit operations.

“The increasing cost of insurance was a concern expressed clearly by representatives at the advisory board meeting last year,” Hegland recalls. “The Dakota Transit Association came forward with funding to investigate potential options for reducing costs to small-sized transit operations.”

Hegland notes that some transit agencies have seen insurance premiums increase by as much as 100 percent or more per year recently. “Agencies are trying to better manage their risk even though the increase in premium does not seem to be the result of increases in property damage or losses of human life.”

For the project, Hegland researched definitions of risk and options employed by transit agencies across the region to finance that risk. Major options include: purchasing commercial insurance, participating in risk retention group insurance plans, participating in state-run insurance pools, and forming insurance purchasing groups.



“How transit agencies finance their risk can have a significant impact on their cash flow,” Hegland notes. “They need to carefully consider what options are available and choose options that best balance risk mitigation with affordability.” Hegland notes that not all options are available to transit operations in all states because of differences in state law. “In some cases, agencies may need to lobby for changes to state law so they will be able to participate in appropriate risk financing options.”

Finally, Hegland says it’s important for transit operators to evaluate their risk management plans. “Identifying and reducing risk is very important for agencies. They need to identify what can go wrong, what they’ll do about it and how they’ll pay for it. It should be a continual process.”

DTA Partnership with SURTC Flourishes



Ron Baumgart
River Cities Transit, Pierre, SD

The Dakota Transit Association conference and rodeo coordinated and managed by the DTA board with SURTC’s assistance was a success, according to Gary Hegland, the SURTC staff member who coordinated the meeting activities.

“For the first time we had a coordinated vendor show, conference and rodeo,” Hegland says. “We had more vendors and higher attendance than we anticipated.”

Official registration at the conference was 80 members and 54 drivers from across North Dakota and South Dakota attended training. The Rodeo attracted 47 competitors.

“The help we’ve received from SURTC has been invaluable,” notes Ron Baumgart, past president of DTA and general manager of River Cities Transit in Pierre, S.D. “This conference is an example of that help. The people who attended and the vendors seemed very pleased.”

The event opened on Saturday, Sept. 17, with the Rodeo, followed by driver training sessions on precision driving, CPR and defibrillation and wheelchair lift procedures on Sunday morning. The vendor show opened at noon on Sunday with presentations on scheduling and dispatching presentations. The conference continued until Wednesday at noon.

Sessions at the conference included presentations by Jennifer Stewart, community planner with the FTA regional office in Colorado; Dale Marsico, executive director of the Community Transportation Administration of America; and Robin Silverman, author and motivational speaker.

“As DTA continues to grow, SURTC’s involvement will be critical,” Baumgart says. “Right now, even the simple things like having a base of operations and someone to call with questions is incredibly important.”

Education

Students and SURTC Help Gauge Satisfaction with Fargo’s Buses

With the help of student bus riders, SURTC will help Fargo-Moorhead’s Metropolitan Area Transit gauge the satisfaction of its riders.

“We want to see how people generally feel about the bus system,” says Jim Gilmour, director of planning and development for the City of Fargo. “Most of the feedback we receive now is limited to when things go wrong.” Gilmour says MAT has conducted surveys before, “but we really want to zero in on the people who are regularly riding the buses.”

SURTC director Jill Hough explains that students will be administering a survey to riders. “We want the survey to be short so that it’s not intrusive, but we want to ask the important questions,” says Hough.

On Nov. 15, 16 and 19, students will ride all routes in Fargo-Moorhead from dawn until well past dusk. Hough says they’ll be asking questions about how frequently riders ride the bus, how friendly they think the drivers are, how easy it is to get information about bus routes, the cleanliness of buses, quality of buses and other issues.

“We’re using students to administer the study because this can be a learning experience for them too,” Hough says. “We also hope to involve students in the process of compiling and analyzing the data we collect.”

The analysis should be complete sometime later this winter. “If there are areas of concern, we’ll investigate those in more detail and make all the corrections we can,” Gilmour says. In addition, the city will be developing a five-year transit plan. “The information from this survey will be useful in that process as well,” Gilmour says.



Student to Design Mobility Centers in SURTC-Sponsored Contest

NDSU students in architecture and landscape architecture will have an opportunity to express their visions for mobility through a SURTC-sponsored design contest.

Students in the fourth year Advanced Urban Design Studio will participate in a contest to design a mobility center for a small city, town or urban setting. “One of the focuses of this class is the concept of transit-oriented development. Everything we’re doing this semester revolves around transportation issues,” says Cindy Urness, an instructor for the course.

“As future urban planners and architects, these students are a key audience for us,” notes SURTC director Jill Hough. “We want to help make them knowledgeable about mobility and transportation issues and get them started early in incorporating those issues into their concepts and thought-processes.”

Urness says students will be challenged to develop a center that encompasses multiple modes of transit including paratransit, taxi service, fixed route service and long-distance transit such as intercity bus, airlines or train. “A mobility center is where any of these modes come together,” she says.

“Similarly, we want those students to think about what that center will look like in a small city like Jamestown, a larger city like Fargo or a suburban area near a large metropolitan area. The linkages that occur among modes of transit may be different in each of those settings,” Urness says. “We want students to look at mobility at all those scales. For a center to meet the demands of all those size situations, students might look at concepts of modular design.”

The students will also be required to incorporate principles of universal design into their concepts. “We want them to think about mobility on that level as well,” Urness says. Universal design is design that accommodates the widest range of potential users, to the benefit of all users.

The design contest will be formally announced to students in mid-November with judging by a panel of SURTC-appointed experts to take place in early December. Depending on how many other instructors involve their sections of the course in the contest, up to 30 students could participate.

SURTC Continues to Offer Transit Course

Students from across the United States will be able to participate in an “Introduction to Public Transportation” course coordinated by SURTC this spring.

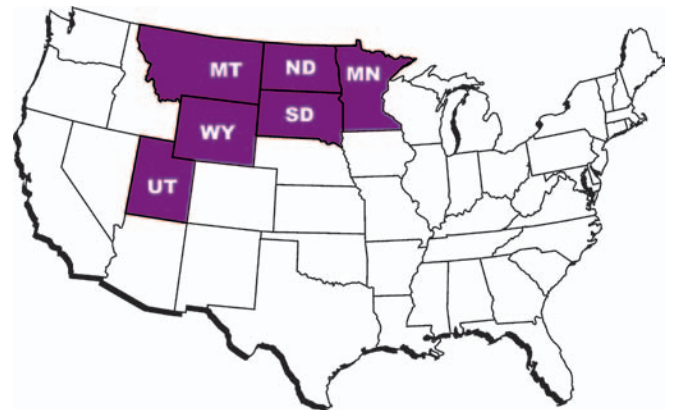
The class features transit case studies, online discussions and presentations on research projects. Lectures are recorded and streamed for student accessibility. Featured speakers for the course have included nationally recognized experts such as William Millar, president of American Public Transportation Association, and Barbara Sisson, Associate Administrator of the Federal Transit Administration.

The course is offered on the NDSU campus and linked to students in other locations via the Transportation Learning Network. This interactive video network with archived presentations and interactive features allows each student to learn at their own pace and accommodate differing holiday breaks and schedules.

Instructor for the course is Jim Miller, a retired faculty member from Pennsylvania State University. He has more than 30 years of experience in public transportation research planning and management and is a leader in developing transportation systems for rural areas.

This year, the course will be open to a limited number of transit managers and staff from throughout the SURTC region. Participants can watch the class for free or register through NDSU to take the class for credit. “The class would provide a good background for transit professionals,” Miller says. “A broader understanding of the overall transit industry puts them in a more knowledgeable position to manage their own operations.”

For more information, contact Sue Hendrickson at (701) 231-7766 or susan.hendrickson@ndsu.edu.



SURTC Geographic Region



Staff



Hough Named to NTI Board

SURTC director Jill Hough was named to the advisory board of the National Transit Institute at Rutgers University in New Jersey.

The NTI provides training, education and clearinghouse services in support of public transportation and quality of life in the United States. The institute has about \$4 million in annual funding provided through the Federal Transit Administration.

Hough says she was selected for the position because NTI was looking for another university representative on its board. "Serving on the NTI advisory board is a nice fit with my responsibilities at SURTC," Hough says. "NTI's emphasis is on training and we'll be able to tap into that and possibly partner with NTI to meet the needs of our clients. Also, I'm able to bring a university voice and a rural and small urban perspective to the NTI board."

The advisory committee usually meets about twice a year. Hough's term is six years.



Graduate Research Assistant Named at SURTC

Yan Wang has joined SURTC as a graduate research assistant. Wang is a Ph.D. student at NDSU in industrial engineering. She earned B.S. and M.A. degrees in engineering from Chang An University in China.

Wang is involved in research on computerized school bus route analysis and development. She is also interested in developing Web, database and computer security applications.



Ulmer Earns American Public Transportation Foundation Scholarship

SURTC graduate research assistant Dustin Ulmer recently received a \$5,000 scholarship from the American Public Transportation Foundation.

The scholarship is directed to an outstanding student who intends to pursue a career in the transit industry. Ulmer, a 2000 graduate of LaMoure High School, attended a scholarship award presentation ceremony during the American Public Transportation Association Annual Meeting and Expo Sept. 25-28 in Dallas.

Ulmer earned his bachelor's degree from NDSU in 2004 in management information systems. He is now working on a master's degree in business administration. Ulmer is working with researchers in creating databases manipulating data and creating spreadsheets for use in studying transit and mobility in the region. He is also interested in developing an expertise in business planning for transit operations.

The American Public Transportation Foundation is part of the American Public Transportation Association, an international organization representing the transit organization since 1882.



Huemmer Joins SURTC as Undergraduate Research Assistant

Paul Huemmer is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree in electrical computer engineering at North Dakota State University. He assists with data collection, database entry, and report preparation. Paul is originally from Saint Paul, MN.



In this issue . . .

SURTC Advisory Board Meeting.....	1
New Advisory Board Members	3
SURTC Funding Increases Under New Transportation Bill	3
Preparing for the Next Generation.....	4
MAT Breaks Ground for New Facility	5
Events Calendar	6
Wyoming's State of Transit	7
RESEARCH	8
Researchers Meet with Bus Industry Representatives	8
Transit Risk Financing Study Complete	8
DTA Partnership with SURTC Flourishes	9
EDUCATION	9
Fargo Bus Satisfaction	9
Student Design Mobility Center Contest.....	10
Transit Course Training.....	10
STAFF	11
Hough Named to NTI Board.....	11
Ulmer Earns American Public Transportation Foundation Scholarship	11
Graduate Research Assistant Named to SURTC.....	11
Huemmer Joins SURTC as Undergraduate Research Assistant	11



Small Urban & Rural Transit Center
 North Dakota State University
 PO Box 5074
 Fargo, ND 58105

Non-Profit Org.
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 Permit No. 818
 FARGO,
 NORTH DAKOTA