

# The Transit Lane

Small Urban & Rural Transit Center • North Dakota State University  
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www.surtc.org

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## Art and Poetry Enhance Fargo Transit



Collaboration between the Fargo-Moorhead's Metropolitan Area Transit and North Dakota State University is bringing art and poetry to transit riders.

The Art in Transit project put reproductions of student artwork in 44 bus shelters around the city. A similar effort, called Poetry on Wheels, put student-written poetry into transit buses.

The ideas struck Tom Riley, dean and professor of arts, humanities and social sciences, as he was riding a MAT bus to the dedication of NDSU's downtown campus last fall.

"We thought it would sure be great to involve the art students in transit," Mike Simonson, transit planner for the city of Fargo, recalls. "The idea went to the NDSU Student Art Society and they ran with it."

Student art for the bus shelters had to meet guidelines for bus and bench advertising and guidelines spelled out in the Americans with Disabilities Act. A panel from NDSU judged the pieces. Simonson says the student-created art may return to bus shelters this fall and winter.

Poetry on Wheels featured poetry by Tri-College University creative writing students and faculty, including David Martinson, lecturer in English; Cindy Nichols, senior lecturer in English; and NDSU creative writing students.

"This is a way to get poetry out of the classroom and into the community," Nichols says. "This is a form of publication for faculty and students. It's a specific audience to write for and it's a lesson in paying attention to your audience."

Because of limited space and concerns over visibility, most of the poems on display were known as "short-short" poems, which are very brief and condensed but lyrical and vary in content and form. They were featured in the two MAT buses that serve the NDSU main campus and the downtown campus and in one NDSU circulator bus.

Simonson says the effort has four main benefits.

- It strengthens the bond between NDSU and the city.
- It creates more public art.
- Students get exposure for their art.
- It brings positive public attention for transit in the city.

"This can't help but be a win-win situation all the way around," he says. For more information about the programs, contact Simonson at [msimonson@matbus.com](mailto:msimonson@matbus.com).



# Completed Research

## Campus Transit Research Underway

For the third consecutive year, SURTC is surveying more students at North Dakota State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead and Concordia College to learn their attitudes toward transit and how they use the Metropolitan Area Transit system.

MAT operates 27 fixed-route buses. The previous studies determined when and where the heaviest student ridership took place, allowing MAT to adjust accordingly.



“The first two years of studies established a baseline information on transit use and attitudes among area college students,” says Jill Hough, SURTC director.

“Continuing surveys will reveal changes in transit use patterns and help MAT better tailor its services and promotional activities.”

The Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments and MAT will work with SURTC to analyze the results and develop ways to improve student mobility. A report on the first two years of research is available at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php).

The study is being conducted by Hough and staff members Del Peterson, Gary Hegland, David Ripplinger and Dustin Ulmer.

### Research or Training Ideas

✓ Please send us your research or training ideas. Email [info@surtc.org](mailto:info@surtc.org) or contact Jill Hough at (701) 231-8082.

✓ Discuss a topic or pose a question on the discussion board to receive feedback from other transit systems or affiliates. Go to [www.surtc.org/signup/dboard.php](http://www.surtc.org/signup/dboard.php).

## Mobility Study Completed

SURTC has nearly completed an 18-month comprehensive look at transportation methods, demographics and geography in North Dakota to find ways to improve mobility for the state's residents.

The study is being conducted for the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) and SURTC researchers offered preliminary recommendations to DOT officials at a meeting in January.

“There is no one silver bullet that will meet all of the mobility needs across the state,” says Jon Mielke, the SURTC researcher leading the project. “That’s because everybody’s mobility needs are different and unique.”

At the meeting, DOT director Dave Sprynczynatyk said he hopes the plan will eventually lead to the development of a mobility index that will allow the DOT to identify areas that require service enhancements and to continually monitor progress that is being made towards the achievement of mobility goals.

“Our ultimate goal is to compare existing service with needs to determine where the gaps are. Based on that, we’ll develop a plan on how best to meet those needs and fill the gaps,” says Jon Mielke.

The effort was launched in April 2004 with a meeting of representatives from nearly two dozen public transportation-related organizations and agencies including social service agencies, transit providers, disability advocacy agencies, and the North Dakota Association of Counties. Those representatives form a steering committee for the study. They identified key issues and outlined concerns faced by transit providers.

The study is part of a statewide strategic transportation plan adopted in 2002 by the NDDOT to provide a shared vision for North Dakota’s transportation system. The plan’s goals call for a transportation system that allows optimum personal mobility. One of the initiatives is the development of a statewide personal mobility plan.

A copy of the report “Personal Mobility in North Dakota: Trends, Gaps, and Recommended Enhancements” (DP-165) and the executive summary is available for download at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php).



## Paratransit Service Analysis

Metropolitan Area Transit (MAT) currently goes beyond the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in serving the Fargo-Moorhead area. However, continuing to do so will be a challenge in the face of a growing metropolitan area and increasing costs.

To best address the community's changing needs, MAT has contracted with SURTC to study the challenges and determine possible solutions, says Dave Ripplinger, SURTC researcher and coordinator of the project.

"MAT's demand-response service is being stretched," he says. "Management wants to determine the best balance between maintaining affordable service for as many clients as possible and charging what is necessary to keep the system viable while remaining in compliance with federal regulations."

MAT is the public busing system in Fargo and West Fargo, North Dakota, as well as Moorhead and Dilworth, Minn. Currently, MAT provides uniform ADA compliant paratransit service to these cities. In addition, the service is provided to areas more than three-quarters of a mile from a fixed-route line not subject to federal ADA regulations.

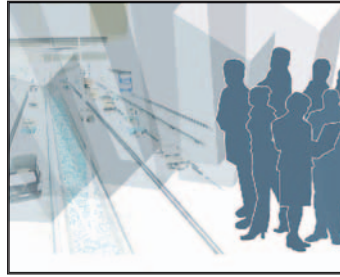


Though it is not required to do so, MAT limits its charges to a flat fee equal to twice its fixed-route fare to riders who travel anywhere in the four cities. "We are helping MAT develop service zones as well as fare structures that will help it provide affordable, high quality service to its riders while remaining in compliance with ADA requirements," Ripplinger says.

Changes may include charging riders premium fares when traveling to or from locations outside the ADA-mandated service area. The higher prices would also serve as a signal to riders and other members of the community of the increased amount of resources necessary to provide service to border areas.

A copy of the report "Metropolitan Area Transit Paratransit Service Boundary Study" (DP-166) is available for download at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php).

## Improved Coordination Using ITS



SURTC researchers are determining how transportation agencies can use Intelligent Transportation Systems to better coordinate their services.

In a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) study, SURTC researcher David

Ripplinger is identifying the impacts of ITS technology on coordination efforts in Kearney, Neb., and suburban Detroit, Mich. SURTC researcher Del Peterson is examining the impacts on coordination efforts in North Dakota.

Reach Your Destination Easily, better known as RYDE, provides bordered transportation to the Kearney community. Despite its brief history, having been established in 2000, RYDE has seen tremendous growth in ridership, especially after the introduction of ITS technologies, Ripplinger notes.

"RYDE has benefited from the development and implementation of its own ITS architecture," he says. "This structure defined the technological components of RYDE's system and how each component interacts with another. Though the process was demanding, it proved to be an incredible planning and communication tool."

The Suburban Metropolitan Authority for Regional Transportation (SMART), located in suburban Detroit, has long been an innovator in both coordination and ITS, Ripplinger says. SMART provides fixed-route and demand-response service to 74 communities in three counties. The agency has developed a centralized data management system allowing individuals or organizations to book rides on SMART vehicles using on-site terminals. This eliminates the need for phone calls and centrally-located scheduling staff.

The state of North Dakota has implemented NDinfo.org, a technology system providing the community with access to an online, statewide human service directory. It is essentially a one-stop shop of all the public transportation systems and providers in the entire state. The project is helpful to transit service providers, professionals and the public.

Users are able to search transportation schedules, hotel shuttles, vehicle rentals, taxis and trains. The long term goal is that users would be able to get information, plan and pay for a trip from a kiosk or PDA.

"The study will have two outcomes. The first is to assist the FTA in better understanding how it can direct future policy with regard to ITS dollars," Ripplinger notes. "The second is that researchers and transit professionals will see how ITS technology has been used and where it works and where it doesn't in terms of coordination."





# Continuing Research

## SURTC Explores Potential for Express Bus Commuter Service

Nearly 50 percent of commuters surveyed indicated they would use an “express” bus for their commute between Fargo-Moorhead and Wahpeton-Breckenridge.

The survey was conducted in cooperation with the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments at the request of Clay County Rural Transit. The proposed service is similar to routes between Detroit Lakes and Barnesville and Fargo-Moorhead.

“As the economic landscape in both Fargo-Moorhead and Wahpeton-Breckenridge changes and evolves, we’re seeing more commuters and a greater exchange of workers and commerce between the two areas,” notes Del Peterson, the SURTC researcher who conducted the survey. “There are a number of hurdles to overcome, but the survey gives excellent background for area transit planners to build from.” The final report on the survey will be available late this summer or early fall.

The biggest hurdle was the availability of transportation back to Wahpeton-Breckenridge in the event of an emergency. When assured of a ride via taxi or some other means, nearly 50 percent of the 60 respondents said they were likely to use the service.

The survey found that most people travel between Wahpeton-Breckenridge and Fargo-Moorhead for employment, with more than 30 percent working in North Fargo. Most respondents followed the traditional 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule. The survey found that potential riders were concerned that the bus would not fit their schedule, would be inconvenient or too costly. Nearly 90 percent were willing to wait only 15 minutes or less for bus transfers.

Information from the American Automobile Association shows that a daily commute between Wahpeton-Breckenridge and Fargo-Moorhead costs about \$1,000 per month. That cost has increased as gas prices have risen in recent months. Respondents were asked if they would use an express bus service if the monthly fare was between \$100 and \$150 and the daily fare was between \$7 and \$10; only 13 percent of the respondents said they would not use the service. About 25 percent said they would use the service and 38 percent said “maybe” and another 25 percent said they needed more information.

## Study May Help Revive Vanpooling

High gas prices and an evolution in demographics and business in North Dakota may revive interest in vanpools.

SURTC and the North Dakota Department of Commerce are exploring the feasibility of establishing vanpools across the state. “We’re going to look at how this concept has changed since North Dakota last had an aggressive program in the late 70s and early 80s,” says Jon Mielke, the SURTC researcher leading the project.

Today there are federal incentives for vanpooling programs, including funds from the Federal Highway Administration for no-interest loans for purchasing vans. Tax law has changed to allow employees to use pre-tax exible spending accounts for transit expenses.

“The economic landscape of North Dakota has changed as well,” Mielke notes. “We have major employers like Pro-Gold, Dakota Growers Pasta, Marvin Windows and others that have facilities located in relatively small communities and that draw employees from a large surrounding area. We also have employees choosing to live in rural areas and commute to larger communities for employment. Those factors lend themselves to ride sharing.”

The study will survey employers across the state to learn about employment trends and employer attitudes toward ride sharing. Furthermore, researchers will survey employees to assess their openness to ride sharing. SURTC staff will also meet with representatives from agencies that could provide additional incentives for vanpooling.

Mielke managed the North Dakota DOT’s vanpooling program in 1979 and 1980. “I went to the Department of Commerce and asked if there was interest in and incentives for vanpooling in the state. It turns out that, yes, there is interest and there are more incentives than there used to be.”



# New Research

## SURTC to Study Bus Industry

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.

“Unfortunately, the transit bus supply chain is not a stable healthy industry,” notes Jim Miller, the SURTC affiliate researcher who developed the concept for the study. “Frequent changes in ownership of bus manufacturers, low profitability and wide swings in demand have contributed to a decline.” Miller will work with SURTC researchers Del Peterson and Jill Hough on the study.

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 be guided by a steering committee of representatives from transit agencies and the bus manufacturing industry. The 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 also 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.

## Scaled-Back Bus Routing Program Moves Forward



A program to develop software and training to improve school bus routing is moving ahead despite funding setbacks.

“The North Dakota Legislature did not provide funding for the program, so we’re moving forward with a scaled back program,” says Dave Ripplinger, coordinator of the program. “As districts continue to consolidate, the issues of efficiency and cost in bus routing will continue to grow.”

SURTC is in the process of choosing a single school district to work with in testing the program. “Originally we had hoped to work with at least two districts to gain broader experience,” Ripplinger says. “In working with a school district we hope to sharpen our efforts as well as illustrate the potential for improving school bus routing in districts across the state.”

SURTC staff members are developing custom software to assist in designing efficient bus routes. The software builds on the center's expertise of rural roads and transportation as well as transit operations and mobility.



## SURTC to Look at Travel Potential of Elderly in Rural Areas

As population across rural regions of the United States consolidates around trade centers, the proportion of elderly remaining in small towns and rural areas continues to grow. Their growing proportion and increasing average age is bound to have an influence on their mobility, and a new SURTC study should help researchers and policy makers assess the situation.

“There is very little data on the travel potential of the elderly, particularly women, in rural areas,” notes Jill Hough, SURTC director and coordinator of the study. “We’ve seen the changing demographics, but no one has really assessed what this means for the mobility of these people.”

The number of Americans older than 65 will more than double by 2030 and 9 million of them will be older than 85 years old. Currently, about 23 percent of those older than 65 live in rural areas. Data also shows that Americans over age 65 are only 25 percent as likely to move as they retire as compared to the elderly of 30 years ago. “The implication is that we’ll have more elderly individuals living in rural areas and more of them will be living in their own homes,” Hough notes.



Hough says the research will:

- Identify factors that influence the travel potential for individuals living in rural areas.
- Identify social factors that influence travel potential for those individuals.
- Identify environmental factors that most impact their travel potential.
- Determine if public transportation services increase the travel potential of rural elderly.

“Because this is a relatively new area of research, we are likely to identify new types of data that will need to be collected on rural elderly populations,” Hough says.

“But most importantly, we ultimately want to make recommendations for improving the travel potential of the rural elderly. Those recommendations could focus on transit services, other services or land-use policies.”

The study is part of Hough’s work toward a doctoral degree from the University of California-Davis. She will collaborate with Susan Handy and Daniel Sperling, both faculty of the Institute of Transportation Studies at UC-Davis.

### Events Calendar

DTA - 2005 Rodeo • September 18 • Minot, ND

DTA - 2005 Annual Conference • September 19-22 • Minot, ND

APTA - Annual Meeting & EXPO 2005 • September 25-28 • Dallas, TX

SURTC - How to Develop a Business Plan • October 18 • via TLN

MPTA - 31st Annual Conference • October 24-26 • Bloomington, MN

TRB - 85th Annual Meeting • January 22-26, 2006 • Washington, DC

SURTC is scheduling training sessions. Please check [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org) for updates.





# Education

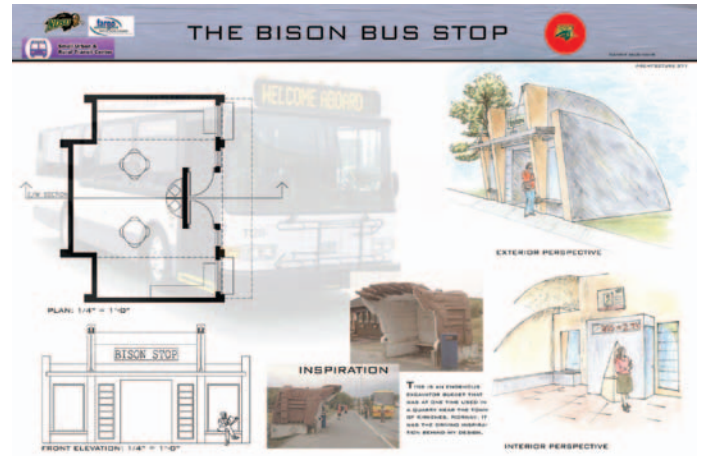
## Students to Design Prototype Bus Shelter at NDSU

As an outgrowth of an architecture student design contest sponsored by SURTC at North Dakota State University, the Federal Transit Administration is funding the development of a prototype transit shelter for northern climate communities.

“In the winter months, transit riders face serious freezing rain, snow, ice and extremely low temperatures,” notes SURTC director Jill Hough. “Improving rider comfort in shelter usability is a key toward increasing transit use. I can’t think of a better place for this project than Fargo.”

Hough is working with NDSU architecture instructor Cindy Urness and students Katie Evans and Daniel McGinnis on the project. “Students always approach projects with a fresh look and are unencumbered with those practical concerns that the rest of us bring,” Urness notes. “We’ll balance that fresh perspective with discussions with transit users and those in transit agencies. What can a structure like a bus shelter bring to the transit system to make it more welcoming?”

The shelter prototype will be modular in design so that it can be easily adapted to various sites and for varying numbers of waiting passengers. It will be solar powered and provide real time messaging with links to the transit system, weather, community news and typical destination points. Hough says the shelter will be designed with an eye toward cost effectiveness, energy efficiency, adaptability, environmental impact, communication technology, aesthetics and accessibility.



*Design by Daniel McGinnis*

“These are all elements that the students incorporated into the designs they developed for our design contest. The students opened our eyes to the possibilities presented by the simple, functional bus shelter,” Hough says.

Urness notes that Evans and McGinnis are daily bus riders and will bring those experiences to the project. McGinnis is from Yankton, S.D., and Evans is from Fergus Falls, Minn. “Those are just the kinds of communities that SURTC is trying to reach. They have good firsthand experience of towns in this region.”

In addition to working on the prototype designs, Urness and the students will be working with a local architect and construction company on construction of two of the bus shelters from SURTC’s student design contest two years ago.

“It will be an opportunity for students to provide input from a user’s perspective and to observe the design process from concept to completion,” Hough says.



*Design by Katie Evans*

## Transit Class Completed

Nineteen students from four states participated in an "Introduction to Public Transportation" course coordinated by SURTC for the second time this spring.

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

The course was offered on the NDSU campus and linked students from Utah, Wyoming and Pennsylvania 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.

"One interesting result of this wonderful technology is that Tom Flanagan, a PhD student at NDSU, was able to take the class from his home in Alaska," notes instructor Jim Miller. Miller, a retired faculty member from Pennsylvania State University, 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.

"The TLN is an invaluable tool for us," says SURTC director Jill Hough. "Allowing students and professionals to share experiences and challenges gives us insight into the field at a national level."

### HOW TO DEVELOP A BUSINESS PLAN

SURTC is conducting a Transit Business Plan development course for transit operators. Writing an excellent business plan is crucial to the success and growth of any business, including transit. The class will be held October 18, 2005, via the Transportation Learning Network (TLN).

For more information on this class visit [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org).

## Training & Outreach

### CCTM Study Guide is Updated

Transit managers across the country will benefit from recent work SURTC staff and cooperators completed with the Community Transit Association of America.

SURTC recently updated the study guide for CTAA's Certified Community Transit Manager program. Transit managers who want to be certified in the program must pass an exam covering several topic areas. The study guide provides background for those studying for the exam.

"The main reason we selected SURTC for this project is that it is uniquely placed to understand the training needs of rural transit providers," says Chris Zeilinger, assistant director for training and government affairs at CTAA. "The timing was perfect for this project; we were desperate to update the guide and SURTC provided the perfect environment for creative thinking."



SURTC director Jill Hough said members of SURTC's steering committee were asked to

help update chapters in the guide in cooperation with a SURTC staff member. "That collaboration helped us integrate real-world thinking and applications into the guide while keeping the chapters consistent and complementary."

"We are thrilled with the results," Zeilinger says. The updated study guide made its debut to transit managers at the Community Transportation EXPO conference in May in St. Louis.

### Website Development Training Offered



Renu Jyoti

SURTC offered website development training to transit agencies in Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota May 4.

The day-long workshop was taught in a computer laboratory at NDSU by Renu Jyoti, an MBA student at NDSU and a computer trainer. Jyoti is employed by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute as a Web developer.

"Transit agencies are aware that websites are becoming increasingly effective ways to reach clients and others with routing, scheduling, contact and policy information," notes Gary Hegland, the SURTC staff member who organized the workshop. "This workshop was designed to give transit agency staff members the tools and background to create and maintain their own websites."





## Staff

### **SURTC Staff are Presenters at Transportation Research Forum**

Three researchers from SURTC presented papers at the Transportation Research Forum's annual meeting March 6-8 at George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

Gary Hegland outlined a SURTC study that identified ways to increase coordination of North Dakota transportation services among traditional transit providers as well as human service agencies and other organizations that provide transportation for their clients. The study was commissioned by the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

Del Peterson presented a study analyzing transit trends in Jamestown, N.D. The local transit provider, James River Transit, is using the study to evaluate changes to its services including the possible addition of a fixed-route service.

David Ripplinger described his preliminary work on improving school bus routing software to better account for uncertainties such as bad weather and road conditions, absent students and other factors.

The Transportation Research Forum is a professional transportation organization dedicated to providing an impartial forum for the exchange of ideas among practitioners, researchers and government officials regarding all aspects of logistics. The Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute is the administrative home of the Forum and its journal.



David Ripplinger, Del Peterson and Gary Hegland

The workshop drew only five participants. "We were disappointed in the turnout, but we're learning that small urban and rural transit organizations don't have the staff time to devote to website development," Hegland says. "The participants were excited about the training because it gave them the knowledge to make smarter decisions about how they will develop and use on-line tools."

Hegland says SURTC will continue to work with regional transit operators and directors to refine its training and services in website development. "Clearly, the Web will continue to be a valuable tool and resource for transit organizations. Our challenge is to find a way to help transit staff members, which are already time-strapped, find ways to use timesaving technology to improve their services without overextending themselves."

### **SURTC to House Regional RTAP Library**

With the idea that one good library is better than three mediocre ones, SURTC will establish a regional library of transit-related training materials for North Dakota, Montana and South Dakota.

In the past, each individual state has supported its own library, often within the state's department of transportation or within a transit organization in the state. The libraries are affiliated with the FTA's Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP).

"With each state having its own, much of the material was old and often there were no convenient procedures for checking it out or reviewing the inventory to see what was available," notes Gary Hegland, who is coordinating the effort for SURTC.

"We don't have enough money to do a good job with the libraries," notes Bruce Fuchs, transit coordinator with the North Dakota DOT. "Consequently, they tend to get overlooked and the transit assistance they can provide doesn't get where it needs to go."

Fuchs suggested consolidating the libraries at SURTC's last steering committee meeting. SURTC began exploring the regional library concept and now the three states have pledged support for the first year of the consolidated effort. Most of the first year's contributions will be used to purchase updated materials for the library.

"So far, our efforts have focused on collecting the existing material in one place and providing an on-line inventory," Hegland says.

A committee with representatives from each state is being formed to guide the development of the library, evaluate old materials to decide what to keep, evaluate new materials to decide what to purchase and set policies, Hegland says.

"There are several benefits to consolidating these libraries," Fuchs says. "We can improve consistency; everybody will have access to the same material in the same way. We have the opportunity to take resources from each state and invest them in quality training materials. Finally, there's expertise in training and technical assistance at SURTC and I'd like to tap into that with a consolidated library."



## Ripplinger Named to TRB Economics Committee



David Ripplinger

SURTC associate research fellow David Ripplinger has been named to the Transportation Economics Committee of the Transportation Research Board.

Committee members review papers for the board's annual meeting, plan the economics portion of the meeting and plan other events related to economics in transportation. The committee's purpose is to encourage the application of economic concepts and methods to the analysis of transportation systems and infrastructure.

The Transportation Research Board is a division of the National Research Council, which serves as an independent adviser to the federal government and others on scientific and technical questions of national importance. Its goal is to promote innovation and progress in transportation through research.

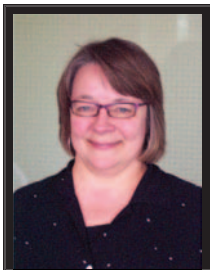
"It's an honor to be asked to be a member of the committee," Ripplinger says. "The invitation reflects well on SURTC's reputation for applied research and indicates recognition by the committee that economic principals need to be more fully integrated into transit research as they have been in highway planning, freight transportation and other areas."

Ripplinger has been an associate research fellow with the institute for about a year. Before that he was an agricultural fellow in Washington, D.C., researching and writing briefs, speeches and papers for Iowa Senator Charles Grassley. He also was a research assistant with the USDA's Economic Research Service.

Ripplinger is originally from Devils Lake, N.D., and earned a B.S. degree in agricultural economics from NDSU and an M.S. in economics from Iowa State University.

## Cindy Urness, Affiliated Faculty

Cindy Urness, originally from Grand Forks, ND, is an assistant professor of architecture at North Dakota State University. She received her bachelor of architecture degree from NDSU and her masters of architecture degree from Pratt Institute in New York, NY. She has more than 20 years of experience as a practicing architect. Cindy is leading the architectural team which is working on a prototypical, modular design for a bus stop which could be constructed easily in small urban locations in northern climates.



## Hendrickson Joins SURTC staff

Sue Hendrickson recently joined the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute as a project coordinator working with SURTC and the Transportation Research Forum.

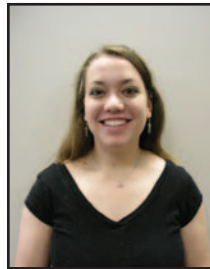


Sue Hendrickson

Hendrickson spent the past 27 years at NDSU working in secretarial, information processing and information technology positions. The past 12 years were spent with the Agriculture Communication department in the computer services unit. Hendrickson says she looks forward to working with the various SURTC programs.

She will be providing administrative support to SURTC programs including contract administration, recordkeeping, publication development and other duties.

## Pedersen Joins SURTC as Undergraduate Research Assistant



Carla Pedersen

Carla joined SURTC in the spring of 2005. She is currently pursuing her bachelors degree in Business Administration at North Dakota State University. Carla assists with data collection and report preparation.

## SURTC Summer Interns

### Katie Evans

Katie Evans is working with SURTC on a summer internship. She is involved with developing innovative small urban transit systems, as well as shadowing the design and construction of the new State-of-the-Art NDSU campus bus shelters. Originally from Fergus Falls, Minn., Katie is currently a fifth year student in the architecture program at NDSU.



### Daniel McGinnis

Daniel McGinnis joined SURTC as a summer intern in 2005. He is entering the 5th year of the architecture program at NDSU and is working under a FTA grant designing prototypical bus shelters for the SURTC region. McGinnis is also involved in the construction of two state-of-the-art bus shelters being erected on the Campus of NDSU this summer.



# Coordination: Stretching Transportation Dollars

## Where's the Future Leading Us?



Keven Anderson, District Project Manager, Transit, Minnesota Department of Transportation

What's the most frequently heard phrase over the last 6-9 months? In my world it has to be "what's the funding going to be?" At least that's what everyone that I work with is asking and you know I still don't have an answer. With the veto of

the Minnesota Transportation bill and the legislature going into special session the future is far from clear.

We have been lucky in Minnesota to have been able to hold the funding to our Transit systems basically at and even so many have found ways to increase their ridership while still "tightening their belts." But even no increase is a decrease when you figure in inflation. So where are we going to look for funds?

My only thought is to get to know your neighbors better. Who manages the local day activity center and how can you share vehicles or dispatching? The schools, by and large, don't want to be in the transportation business. How can you meet their needs and still service your customers? How are the veterans getting to town for medical appointments?

One phrase that one of my directors used in a board meeting keeps coming back to me: "Who in the world is funding all the transportation I see in our community? It seems like everyone has a budget line item for transportation!"

Well who's got it and how can we share it?

## North Dakota's Statewide Online Information System

NDinfo.org is North Dakota's information hub linking people to services, organizations and events in their community. NDinfo.org was created to provide much needed support to the non-profit and government agencies that serve North Dakota citizens and is now expanding to provide for day-to-day information and human service needs for all North Dakota citizens. The NDinfo.org information system has had many partners working collaboratively together in support of an information delivery system for the citizens of North Dakota. To access this information hub, go to [www.NDinfo.org/](http://www.NDinfo.org/).

## Montana Seeks Coordination Examples

Tom Steyaert, Transit Section Supervisor, Montana Department of Transportation



Because of increasing interest in passenger transportation coordination at the national, state, and local levels, the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) will soon begin an effort to develop model processes for developing local coordination plans in Montana communities. The goal of this effort is to create models or templates that transportation providers can adapt to fit their specific needs and community characteristics.

In cooperation with the Montana Transit Association, MDT will work with a variety of transportation providers to develop and test processes and plans that are appropriate for Montana's primarily rural communities. Although transportation providers in many of these communities are already coordinating services, the new model processes will give providers a new tool to improve and document their efforts. This tool will be especially important if TEA-21 reauthorization legislation requires Section 5310 providers to develop local coordination plans. Our goal is to complete this effort by Dec. 31 so the processes will be available to providers in early 2006.

To help us in this effort, we are seeking examples of similar processes from transportation agencies and providers in other states. If you have something you think would help us, please contact Tom Steyaert, MDT's Transit Section Supervisor, at (406) 444-4210 or [tseyaert@mt.gov](mailto:tseyaert@mt.gov).

## SURTC's New Logo

Unless you look close, you may miss SURTC's new logo. It looks similar to the old one, but the new logo has people in the bus.



"Our mission at SURTC is to increase the mobility of small urban and rural residents through improved public transportation," notes director Jill Hough. "That means we're not interested in empty buses, but full ones that represent transit agencies doing the best job possible of serving their communities and clients."





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