

TRANSIT LANE

Small Urban & Rural Transit Center
North Dakota State University

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Transit Leaders Help SURTC Develop Strategic Plan

A rigorous full-day planning session that included staff members as well as regional and national leaders in the transit industry has yielded SURTC's first strategic plan.

"The planning process allowed us to tap the expertise of a broad cross section of talented people," notes SURTC Director Jill Hough. "The resulting plan will provide direction for our research, education and training and outreach efforts. As our program grows, the strategic plan will be valuable in keeping us focused on our primary clients and mission."

In addition to SURTC staff, participants in the process included:

- Al Abeson, director of Easter Seals Project ACTION
- J. Barry Barker, executive director of the Transit Authority of River City, Louisville, KY
- Ron Baumgart, executive director of River Cities Transit, Pierre, SD
- Bob Bright, executive director of the Fargo Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments
- Bruce Fuchs, public transit program manager with NDDOT
- Gene Griffin, director, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute
- Lyn Hellegaard, coordinator of the Montana Transit Association
- David Lee, general manager of Connecticut Transit
- Dave Leftwich, local government division engineer with NDDOT
- Bill Millar, president of APTA

- Jim Moench, executive director of the ND Disabilities Advocacy Consortium
- Bruce Robinson, Office of Research, Demonstration and Innovation, Federal Transit Administration
- Robert Skinner, executive director of the Transportation Research Board
- Pam Ternes, director of the Standing Rock Public Transportation
- Chris Zeilinger, assistant director for governmental affairs and training for the Community Transportation Association of America

Participants separated into groups to focus on research, training and outreach, and education. Within those groups, participants identified key program areas, approaches and priorities. At the end of the session, each group presented a summary and all those in attendance selected top priorities in each area.

(Strategic Plan continued on page 2)



(Strategic Plan continued)

In presenting a summary of the research group's discussion, Bill Millar commented, "The foundation of SURTC is state and local relationships. You need to build on those to develop multi-state relationships. Don't be afraid to say that you are going to be *the* national center for small urban and rural public transportation issues. Don't be shy about that. Our group felt there was a tremendous lack of work in this area."

Research

Participants in the research group urged SURTC to maintain a balance of applied and academic research with a focus on obtaining measurable results. Research should reflect the center's emphasis on rural and small urban transit. They emphasized that efforts should be made to apply local problem-solving efforts nationally. Research opportunities included improving public transit awareness in small urban and rural communities; transit applications within sprawling small urban areas; and the influence of energy costs on transit.

Training and Outreach

Participants in the training and outreach group drew information from a recent SURTC training survey conducted in North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Minnesota to identify key training needs for transit drivers. Top driver training needs were defensive driving, PASS, first aid, and handling difficult passengers. For managers, top needs were ADA requirements, ADA rights and responsibilities of providers, ADA rights and responsibilities of customers, and customer service. The group suggested that SURTC continue to build on its training programs and expand its image by increasing outreach efforts to additional state transit associations and through participation in national conferences. Proposed training priorities would be an "Introduction to Transit Management" course, a train-the-trainers travel training program, and workshops on ADA, coordination, and emotional intelligence.

Education

Participants in this group indicated that education programs could be differentiated from training and outreach by defining education programs as those offered for credit and enrolling students working toward a degree or certificate granted by an institution of higher learning. They noted that programs should be focused to build competencies for those in different stages of their careers, for example those at the start of their careers in transit management vs. those at the mid-career level. Participants also noted the need for

a transit textbook that would draw on expertise from across the industry and serve as a text for students in formal courses, and as a resource for those already in the field.

Advisory Board Endorses Strategic Plan

SURTC's advisory board endorsed results of the center's strategic planning process at its annual meeting in September.

"The meeting was an opportunity for our advisory board members to walk through the proposed strategic plan and provide input and reaction to the plan," noted SURTC Director Jill Hough. "We look to these individuals for direction in our research, training and outreach and education programs, so it's essential that they provide input into our planning process and concur with the end result."

Board members encouraged SURTC staff members to further prioritize areas of effort identified under the strategic plan headings of "research," "education," and "training and outreach." Additionally, the board members noted their agreement with plans to build on relationships with transit related groups, noting that state departments of transportation and state transit organizations were particularly important.

In general, the group praised the plan and endorsed its implementation. "That's a significant step in this process," Hough said. "The endorsement of the board signals that we're focusing on the right issues and tasks."

Ternes Named to Advisory Board

Pam Ternes, director of Standing Rock Public Transportation in Fort Yates, N.D., was named to the SURTC advisory board to fill the position vacated by Carol Wright. Wright, formerly of James River Transit, was hired as SURTC associate director of Training and Outreach. Standing Rock Public Transportation is a community service of Sitting Bull College, providing transportation on or near the reservation since 1989. The program operates eight fixed routes and demand-response service. The program is funded by Sitting Bull College and the Standing Rock



New Bus Garage for Fargo-Moorhead Completed

A new garage the cities of Fargo, ND, and Moorhead, MN, will share to store and service their buses is the latest example how bus services can cooperate despite a river, city borders and state lines that might normally prevent them from working together.

“We have quite a few partnerships with Moorhead,” notes Jim Gilmour, director of planning for the City of Fargo. “But this is probably the largest,” he says referring to the garage.

The 55,860-square-foot facility was completed late this fall and the Fargo buses rolled through the doors on Nov. 18. They were joined by Moorhead buses on Jan. 1. City mechanics moved in during early December, and the administrative staff moved into the building in January.

The City of Fargo stored its buses in an older garage in north Fargo while Moorhead contracted with a private company to store and service its buses south of that city. The new facility will bring the buses and service under one roof. “The new garage gives us the advantage of sharing maintenance facilities and staff,” Gilmour says. The garage has room for 50 buses. The Metro Area Transit currently has a combined fleet of 37.

The Federal Transit Administration provided \$5.6 million for the \$7 million project through the North Dakota and Minnesota departments of transportation. Fargo spent \$933,000 and Moorhead spent \$467,000. Construction was completed in 14 months.

Previously the cities had separate contracts with different companies to provide bus drivers, creating a duplication of driver management services. As of January 1, with all buses and operations in a central location, the two cities also began using the same driver services company. The contracts are

with Laidlaw Transit Services, which has been providing bus driver services for many years. “We’ll have one company supplying drivers and one management team. That will be more efficient and give both cities a bigger pool of drivers,” Gilmour says.

This is an approach that could be used with buses in the future. “Right now both cities own their own buses. In the future, we may be able to find a way to share buses. That will cut costs further because we’ll need fewer spares,” he says.

In the meantime, the garage is a big step forward. “We tried to make the design as energy-efficient as possible while giving us the ability to upgrade in the future,” he said.

The garage is heavily insulated and has in-floor heat to help retain and maintain more even temperatures when the large overhead doors open and close frequently. The doors also have rapid openers/closers to minimize the amount of heat lost. Roof water is captured for irrigation of the surrounding landscape and water from the drive-through bus wash bay is recycled.

The roof is reinforced to allow for the installation of solar panels sometime in the future. Waste oil from the buses can be burned to provide supplemental heating, and extra fuel tanks have been installed so alternative blends of biodiesel can be tested and used.

FTA Administrator Visits SURTC

Federal Transit Administration Region 8 Administrator Lee Waddleton visited SURTC in September as part of a tour of transit-related facilities and activities in North Dakota. Waddleton was in North Dakota to meet with Bruce Fuchs of the NDDOT. Fuchs arranged the tour. In Fargo, Waddleton visited MAT facilities and spent time meeting with SURTC staff to learn more about its programs. He has been Region 8 administrator since 2000. Region 8 headquarters is in Denver, CO, and includes the states of Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. It was recently announced that Waddleton will be retiring soon from the FTA. Letitia Thompson will be acting administrator. She is currently administrator in Region 2.



Photo courtesy of Metro Area Transit



River Cities Public Transit is CTAA's Rural Transit System of the Year



Ron Baumgart

The 2006 CTAA Community Transportation Rural Transit System of the Year winner was River Cities Public Transit, Pierre, SD. Director Ron Baumgart is on SURTC's advisory board.

The award was presented at CTAA's annual conference in Orlando, FL, in June. At the awards ceremony, Baumgart noted the group effort required to attain such recognition and invited representatives from his Board of Directors, his staff, the South Dakota Department of Transportation, and SURTC on stage to join him in accepting the award. He also acknowledged his agency's appreciation to Easter Seals Project ACTION for their training and technical assistance.

Jim Miller, a retired faculty member from Pennsylvania State University and SURTC affiliate faculty member wrote a letter of support that accompanied River Cities Public Transit's nomination. In the letter, Miller noted, "RCPT's success can be attributed to at least the following three factors: its vision of comprehensive public community transportation services, a coordination model that is open to a wide variety of cooperative arrangements, and strong management and leadership."

Miller continued, "RCPT provides 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week demand responsive transportation to its core service area of Pierre and Ft. Pierre and daily or weekly services to outlying areas. Its evolution from a very limited human service transportation services was born out of a commitment to the local community to take over a failing taxi service, thus preserving the only public transportation in South Dakota's capitol city. While not without frustration and setbacks, RCPT developed the internal organization and operating practices to offer around-the-clock public transportation on demand or with prior reservation. . . . If individuals need transportation, RCPT will do everything possible to provide the rides."

FTA recognition

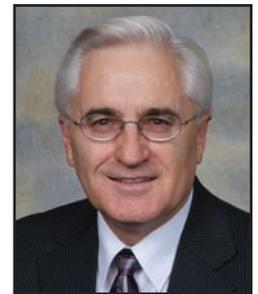
In November River Cities Transit of Pierre, SD, received the 2006 FTA Administrators Award for Outstanding Public Service in Rural Transportation. The award recognizes rural transportation systems that have worked in communities to enhance transportation services to bridge gaps between people and places with partnerships and innovative service strategies that targeted specific gaps and/or unmet needs.

In a letter supporting the nomination for the award, SURTC Director Jill Hough said, "River Cities Transit is an innovative agency which has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to rural public transit. They have worked diligently to provide the communities in which they are located a full range of transportation options that are available 24/7 for people of all ages and abilities."

Carl Rathbun, driver supervisor with River Cities Transit, accepted the award on behalf of the agency at the National Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference in Stevenson, WA.

New NDDOT Director Commends Transit Providers

On Oct. 5, Francis Ziegler was appointed to serve as director of the NDDOT by North Dakota Governor John Hoeven.



Francis Ziegler

Ziegler has been employed with the NDDOT for the past 36 years and worked on numerous transportation initiatives as well as many major projects around the state, including the new Four Bears Bridge, the Memorial Bridge, and the four-lane expansion of U.S. Highway 2.

"In working with department management over the years on a variety of programs, I understand that transit providers are an important integrated network which provides services throughout the state," Ziegler said.

Ziegler is a native of Zeeland, ND, so he understands the importance of transportation systems in rural areas. Coming from a rural community, he has seen how it is often difficult to provide mobility services, which impacts citizens in these areas.

"Statewide transit providers, the Dakota Transit Association (DTA) and the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center (SURTC) have developed a strong cooperative relationship with NDDOT. I hope to build on that relationship and will encourage my staff to continue open lines of communication," Ziegler said.

Ziegler added, "The NDDOT believes that developing a teamwork philosophy is the best way to get things accomplished. Our partnership with transit providers, DTA and SURTC is an important element of that team."



The director applauds transit providers for the services they've provided and successes accomplished across the state. He noted that during the past few years it has been evident that transit services are an integral part of creating safe transportation.

"Transit providers are a vital component of North Dakota's economy, and we will continue to look for ways to improve services," he said. "I look forward to building partnerships and meeting members at conferences. Please feel free to stop by the NDDOT office and visit at your convenience."

He and his wife, Jan, are residents of Bismarck; they have four children, and seven grandchildren.

EDUCATION

Susan Handy Seminar: Driving by Choice or Necessity



Americans drive more each year, with the average American household logging more than 31,000 miles in 2001. Often, drivers insist that owning a car and driving is a necessity, but some researchers are exploring whether driving is done by choice or necessity.

Susan Handy, a professor of environmental science and policy at the Institute of Transportation Studies at the University of California-Davis, addressed the topic at a Sept. 27 seminar at NDSU. The seminar was sponsored by SURTC and the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. Nearly 30 students and staff members attended.

"Why are we driving so much?" Handy asked. "Because we have to or because we want to?" She noted that if researchers could make a distinction between the two, there would be significant public policy implications. "If we're driving by necessity, then everyone benefits if we reduce the need to drive. If we're driving by choice, do we discourage driving to reduce externalities or do we accommodate driving to increase utility?"

In their research, Handy and her colleagues found that drivers engage in "excess driving" by taking extra trips, choosing longer routes, picking more distant destinations and choosing the car over other possible travel modes. Why? Because they like to drive, they enjoy other activities while driving, or they chose driving out of a desire for variety or out of habit, laziness, and poor planning. "But the driving that people want to eliminate is the driving they need to do rather than the driving they choose to do," Handy notes.

She noted transportation planning has traditionally focused on making it easier to drive. Wider highways with controlled access or traffic lights timed to ease traffic flow are examples. Another approach is to discourage driving through congestion pricing on tollways or the addition of emission taxes.

Handy noted that an alternative approach is being used by a number of urban areas: making it easier to drive less. Examples include enhanced bike trails and walking paths, added transit options and routes, urban planning that includes plans to services and retail businesses closer to residential neighborhoods while incorporating transit and other alternatives.

Events Calendar

TRB - 86th Annual Meeting
January 21-25, 2007 • Washington, DC

TRF - 2007 Annual Forum
March 15-17, 2007 • Boston, MA

APTA - 2007 Bus & Paratransit Conference
May 6-9, 2007 • Nashville, TN

CTAA - EXPO 2007
May 19-25, 2007 • Reno, NV

ITS America - 2007 Annual Meeting & Exposition
June 4-6, 2007 • Palm Springs, CA

APTA - Annual Meeting & EXPO 2007
October 7-10, 2007 • Charlotte, NC

APTA - Transportation & University Communities
Conference • TBA

Please check www.surtc.org for updates



RESEARCH

Turtle Mountain and Rolette County Transit Development Plan

SURTC researchers recently completed a transit development plan for the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation and Rolette County in north central North Dakota. The plan was requested by tribal officials and prepared with support from the North Dakota Department of Transportation and the Federal Transit Administration.



Jon Mielke

“The plan addresses significant challenges including a high unemployment rate and a lack of transportation alternatives that are available to many local residents. The area’s closest regional center, Minot, is 120 miles away,” noted Jon Mielke, the SURTC researcher who directed the effort.

The final report presents a wide array of recommendations and implementation strategies that are designed to improve the personal mobility of people living on the reservation and elsewhere in Rolette County. Implementation strategies prioritize each recommendation and identify potential funding sources. Short term priorities include coordinating the services of existing service providers, expanding service hours, standardizing fares, and undertaking an aggressive marketing campaign to increase public awareness of available services. Long term priorities include the initiation of local fixed route services to augment existing dial-a-ride services and to connect the area to its regional center via daily intercity bus service.

The plan was developed with extensive input from a steering committee comprised of local transit operators, human service and employment agency representatives, tribal and local officials, representatives of the local medical community, tribal college personnel, and state and federal agencies. Many of these entities would also be represented on a transit advisory board recommended by the study.

Tribal officials adopted the final report and used it as the basis for soliciting tribal transit funds that became available for the first time when Congress enacted the SAFETEA-LU highway bill. The tribe’s application was submitted in mid-October. The Federal Transit Administration expects to announce successful recipients in early 2007.

SURTC researchers and tribal officials believe that implementing the plan’s recommendation will significantly increase transit ridership on the reservation and elsewhere in Rolette County and greatly enhance the personal mobility of area residents. A copy of the plan is available on SURTC’s web site at www.surtc.org.

State Management Plan Nears Completion



Dustin Ulmer

SURTC is working with the NDDOT to complete a North Dakota State Transit Management Plan. The plan will reflect state and federal requirements for transit agencies and for the use of public funds designated for transit.

“The plan will be condensed considerably from the previous plan, making it easier for agencies to read and apply to their operations,” says Dustin Ulmer. The new plan will include changes introduced in the new Federal Transportation Bill. As part of the development process, Ulmer and DOT officials reviewed plans from other states to consider approaches that could be incorporated into a workable plan for North Dakota.

The plan will be a guide for funding application processes and timelines, minimum requirements, selection criteria, and reporting and monitoring requirements.



TRAINING and OUTREACH

SURTC Expands PASS Training

Since SURTC began the PASS Driver Certification program in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Utah, more than 200 drivers have been certified and 16 people are now certified to teach the training, according to Gary Hegland, SURTC's coordinator of training and outreach.



Gary Hegland

Hegland was certified as a trainer last year at a session held in Oacomo, SD, sponsored by SURTC and the Dakota Transit Association. He now works with agencies across the region to provide the program to their drivers. The training teaches drivers to deal with people with varying disabilities, including how to load them onto wheelchair lifts and to ensure they have a safe and secure ride.

Not only do drivers learn how to transport passengers safely and securely, they also learn how to be sensitive to the special needs of the passengers. "We talk to them about 'people first' language. They are not disabled people, but rather people with disabilities," Hegland explained.

Hegland says interest in the training is continuing to grow, and more training sessions are being scheduled for this winter.

Not only has the training expanded from its beginnings, many transit agencies have reported more complimentary phone calls from passengers following the completion of the training. Ron Baumgart, director of River Cities Transit in Pierre, SD, said his office has received double the amount of complimentary phone calls the office normally receives.

The future goal for PASS training is to continue to offer the training to new bus drivers, and recertify those who have already gone through the training. "There's a fair turnover in bus drivers around the two states, so in the future we'd like to continue to provide the PASS training to all new bus drivers," Hegland said.

Carol Wright, SURTC Associate Director of Training and Outreach, is also certified for the training and feels it is an important endeavor. "There aren't very many training opportunities available for drivers, and this is one that is very practical. It teaches skills that drivers can learn and use on the job every single day," Wright said.

SURTC Helps Plan Transit Sessions at Tribal Transportation Conference

The Ninth Annual National Tribal Transportation Conference featured transit planning sessions for the first time this year thanks to help from SURTC.

Dennis Trusty, director of the regional Tribal Technical Assistance Program in Bismarck had worked with UGPTI and SURTC on previous projects and requested help in planning the sessions. This year's conference was held Nov. 13-16 in Cabazon, CA.

"Previous conferences have been focused largely on roads and bridges, but this year, expanded sessions in transit planning were included because of new transit funding available through the new federal Transportation Bill," notes SURTC specialist Jon Mielke. "As a consequence of that funding, the sessions generated considerable interest at the conference."

He explained that SURTC organized three sessions for the conference. The first focused on transit basics such as types of transit services, funding sources, benefits of transit services and basic concepts of transit planning. Representatives from the Community Transit Association of America conducted that session.

Two half-day sessions provided content more in-depth content on key topics for rural transit systems. SURTC instructor Jim Miller presented a session on developing business plans for transit agencies. Mielke presented a session on creating a transit development plan. He used SURTC's work with Rolette County and the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation as a case study in that course.



Human Resource Management Training Offered in Utah

SURTC staff members Carol Wright and Gary Hegland presented a course in human resource management at the Utah Urban/Rural Specialized Transportation Association Annual Conference in Salt Lake City in September.

The seminar is one of several training courses offered by SURTC. It provides tools to assist new and experienced transit supervisors, managers, and directors select and manage employees. It is designed to walk employers through the hiring process and the development of an effective employee handbook. At the conclusion of the session, participants each receive an employee handbook template they can customize for their own agencies.

“Employee selection and hiring are the most critical management functions for developing and maintaining a vibrant, customer service-oriented and successful company,” Wright notes. “When managers consistently do an excellent job in selecting and hiring the right staff and management adheres to established company standards, a better workforce will result. Employees are the most valuable asset an organization has, so it is of utmost importance that leadership hires the best and treats employees professionally and fairly.”

Wright is SURTC’s associate director of training and outreach. She is a Certified Community Transit Manager and was a director of transportation services for more than 11 years. Gary Hegland is SURTC’s training and outreach coordinator. He is a Certified Transit Program Administrator and has significant experience in employment issues from his previous employment at Job Service North Dakota.



Canine Mobility!

Rover’s Playhouse, a Fargo dog daycare, grooming, pet boarding and pet supply enterprise also has its own bus. This eye-catching vehicle is an attention-getter for the business which uses it as a marketing tool. Dogs love it because they don’t have to chase cars anymore – they can take the bus!



SURTC Offers Training on Fundraising and Local Match

Raising money for transit operations is always a challenge. SURTC offered a seminar focusing on numerous ways of generating operating capital. The seminar was held Oct. 18 in Bismarck, ND, and Nov. 9 at the Utah Transit Authority Training Center in Salt Lake City.

“The rules and regulations vary from state to state in terms of financial assistance available to transit systems,” noted Gary Hegland. “This seminar focused on investigating an organization’s situation and brainstorming funding options based on the skills, abilities and knowledge of the staff.”

Hegland conducted the seminar along with Ron Baumgart, executive director of River Cities Public Transit in Pierre, SD. The seminar was intended for transit managers, board members and transit bookkeepers.

School Transportation Efficiency Training Completed



Dave Ripplinger

In cooperation with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, SURTC researcher David Ripplinger conducted a School Transportation Efficiency training program across the state in 2005 and 2006. The final sessions in the training were offered in October, November and December in Devils Lake, Bismarck and Valley City.

In total, the training consisted of nine modules. Topics included coordinated maintenance, routing, technology, finance, safety, and security. The 2005 North Dakota Legislature provided funding for the program through the Department of Public Instruction.

Ripplinger says many rural districts are facing declining tax bases and declining enrollments. This forces them to look for ways to be more economical and efficient in transporting students. “The training exposed superintendents to concepts and fundamentals that will help them do a better job with their transportation programs,” he says.



STAFF

Wright Serves on Human Services Transit Committee

Carol Wright, SURTC's associate director of training and outreach, is serving on a steering committee to develop a Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan.

The NDDOT assembled the committee which also includes representatives from the NDDOT, the ND Department of Human Services – Aging Services Division, the ND Department of Commerce, Community Action, the Bismarck Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the City of Fargo Metropolitan Area Transportation, Bis-Man Transit, the Fargo Senior Commission Transportation, and the Grand Forks MPO. The committee is chaired by Wade Kline of the Fargo Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments.

“With my background in rural transportation and in my capacity with SURTC, I’ll be representing rural transit providers on the committee,” Wright noted. She served as director of James River Transit in Jamestown before joining SURTC.

In August 2005, Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) reauthorizing the surface transportation act. As part of this reauthorization, grantees under the New Freedom Initiative, Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) and the Elderly and Disabled Transportation Program (Section 5310) must meet certain requirements in order to receive funding for FY 2007 and beyond. One of those requirements is that projects must be part of a “locally developed, coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.” This plan must be developed through a process that includes representatives of public, private, and non-profit transportation services, human services providers and the general public.

The North Dakota committee had its first meeting in Bismarck in September and a telephone conference mid-November. The committee is responsible for addressing application criteria and the process by which projects will be funded.

The NDDOT will conduct a statewide competitive selection process for the JARC, New Freedom and Section 5310 funds. This will be accomplished in coordination with the state’s Metropolitan Planning Organizations in the urban areas and with the Regional Development/Planning Councils (RDCs) and Community Action Agencies in rural areas. The goal is for the NDDOT to use a panel of planning partners to assist in reviewing and ranking projects to be funded.

New Staff



Carol Wright

SURTC hired Carol Wright as associate director responsible for training and outreach.

Wright received her B.S. in Speech/English/Education at North Dakota State University in 1975, and went on to complete her M.S. in Human Development and Education/Gerontology in 1994, also at NDSU.

For nearly 12 years, Wright had been the executive director of James River Transit and Wells/Sheridan Transit in Jamestown, ND. She was responsible for all aspects of public transportation including urban transit, rural transit, specialized transit, Dial-A-Ride and contracted services in the three-county area surrounding Jamestown.

She is currently a board member of the Community Transportation Association of America and past president of the Dakota Transit Association.

She was certified in 2005 by the Community Transportation Association of America as a Community Transit Manager. In addition, she was also certified as a Passenger Service and Safety (PASS) Trainer in 2005.

Xinyu (Jason) Cao recently joined SURTC as an associate research fellow.



Xinyu (Jason) Cao

In 1998, Cao received his B.S. in civil engineering from Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. He earned his M.S. in civil engineering from the same university in 2001. In 2005, he received his M.S. in statistics from the University of California-Davis. Also at the University of California-Davis, he recently completed his Ph.D. in civil engineering with an emphasis on transportation planning. In addition, he completed a University of California Transportation Center Dissertation Fellowship.

(New Staff continued on page 10)

(Wright continued on page 10)



Hough appointed to Transit Cooperative Research Program Project Panel



Jill Hough

Jill Hough, Director of the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center, was recently appointed to the Transit Cooperative Research Program Project Panel (J-11) on American Public Transportation Association-Related Research by the National Research Council and the Transportation Research Board executive committee.

Hough will bring an academic perspective to the panel and provide technical guidance and counsel for transit-related research projects and input on potential projects and research methods. The panel provides direction for public transportation at the national level.

Hough has more than 15 years experience in transportation research. She currently serves on the TCRP Oversight and Project Selection (TOPS) Committee, on the TCRP Panel on Rural/Small Urban Transit Agency Salary Structures, Policies and Procedures (F-12), and on the TCRP Synthesis of Transit Practices Program, participating in a Synthesis of Paratransit Managers' Skills, Qualifications and Needs (SF-12). She is also a board member of the National Transit Institute.

(New Staff continued)

At SURTC, Cao will research transit-oriented development and solutions in small urban and rural transit. In the past he has done research on land use and transportation planning, alternative fuel vehicles and information communication technology.

Some of Cao's current research projects include mobility for the disadvantaged in North Dakota, the time-space structure of Chinese urban residents and a pavement noise study.

SURTC Staff Attend 2006 National Rural ITS Conference

Two SURTC staff members attended the 2006 National Rural Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Conference in Bozeman, MT, August 13-16.

The conference provided an opportunity for transportation professionals to obtain information on rural transportation issues and exchange ideas and information regarding the challenges faced in rural transportation.

Researcher Del Peterson was particularly intrigued by a session on coordinated public mobility. Examples from Idaho and California were used to show how ITS technology could be used to coordinate public transit. "Use of ITS in urban areas is fairly common," Peterson notes. "Now rural areas are beginning to use similar technologies and realizing the potential benefits as well."



Del Peterson

SURTC Director Jill Hough also attended the conference. In conjunction with the conference, the Federal Transit Administration invited ITS practitioners and users in the transit industry to discuss how to best put the technology to use in transit applications. Hough was invited to participate in that discussion.

"The discussion focused on developing peer groups that would share ideas on using ITS. We also discussed developing performance measures that transit agencies could use to gauge the success of ITS use," Hough said. "It was helpful to participate in those discussions. The transit agencies that we work with in small urban and rural areas will need to make decisions regarding how to use this technology."

(Wright continued)

Proposed partners may include representatives from the NDDOT Transit and Local Government Divisions, the ND Department of Commerce, the three metropolitan planning organizations, the ND Department of Human Services, and the non-profit/non-government sector. This committee will make recommendations for awarding grant funds, and the final decision ultimately will rest with the administration of the North Dakota Department of Transportation.



American Public Transportation Foundation Scholarship Renewed for Ulmer

A scholarship from the American Public Transportation Foundation was recently renewed for SURTC graduate research assistant Dustin Ulmer. The original award was for \$5,000. The renewal was for \$3,000.

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 Oct. 8-11 in San Jose, CA.



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 developing databases, analyzing 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 transit since 1882.

Cao Honored for Outstanding Dissertation

Xinyu (Jason) Cao received the Charley V. Wootan Memorial Award from the Council of University Transportation Centers in January. Cao is an associate research fellow with the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center, part of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute.

The national award recognizes a student in transportation for an outstanding Ph.D. dissertation in policy and planning. Before joining SURTC in July, Cao completed his Ph.D. in civil engineering with an emphasis on transportation planning at the University of California-Davis. In addition, he has received a University of California Transportation Center Dissertation Fellowship. His dissertation, "The Causal Relationship Between the Built Environment and Personal Travel Choice: Evidence from Northern California," examines the causes behind travel choices made by individuals living in areas with various land-use characteristics.

Cao received the award at the annual Council of University Transportation Centers Awards Banquet in Washington, DC. The honor also includes a \$2,000 cash award. The banquet is held during the national meeting of the Transportation Research Board.

At NDSU, Cao is investigating transit-oriented development and solutions in small urban and rural transit.

SURTC Publishes Annual Report

SURTC produced its first annual report in 2006 to detail work underway and completed through 2005.

"The report has been a valuable tool in demonstrating our accomplishments and capabilities to potential partners at the local, regional and national level," notes SURTC Director Jill Hough.

The report includes project highlights in the areas of research, training and outreach, and education. It was printed and distributed to key transit officials and project partners in early 2006. It is also on-line at www.surtc.org/about/annrpt/.



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