

TRANSIT LANE

Small Urban & Rural Transit Center
Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute • North Dakota State University

Vol. 8, Issue 1

Published semi-annually

Spring 2010

SURTC Advisory Board provides research topic insight

National and regional transit experts met Sept. 9 at NDSU to provide input on SURTC's programs.

The 19 visiting experts at the meeting noted that transit is seeing a resurgence of interest. Vincent Valdes, associate administrator for research, demonstration and innovation at the Federal Transit Administration, noted that the change in presidential administration and the investment of economic stimulus funds in transportation has placed mobility in a new spotlight. "It has been wonderful for us because we see a new interest in mobility, not just transit, but mobility overall," he says.



Vincent Valdes



Francis Ziegler

Interest in transit has increased regionally as well. "Transit has often been treated as an afterthought. I'm telling legislators, the buses are no longer empty," noted Francis Ziegler, director of the ND Department of Transportation. "We have a population that needs this mode of transportation, and this group

(SURTC) has an opportunity to shape that mode."

That increased interest is not without challenges. Representatives of transit agencies on SURTC's advisory board described several research and outreach needs for SURTC to consider as they plan activities for the coming year.

(Advisory Board continued on page 2)

SURTC hosts national summit on workforce development for public transportation

With fuel price increases, an emphasis on "green" transportation, and a growing reliance on public transportation by retiring baby boomers, public transportation has been in the spotlight like never before. As a result, interest and ridership is up. But a lack of qualified workers may be a roadblock in the otherwise bright future of the industry. A national conference, "Solutions Summit for Public Transportation Workforce Development" was held in Fargo Sept. 10 to bring experts from across the country together to exchange ideas and develop strategies to address this need for workers and leaders.

"The need for professionals in public transit could significantly hamper the industry's ability to meet the mobility needs of its clients," notes Jill Hough, director of the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center, a sponsor of the conference. "We're looking at how we can develop workers and leaders from technicians, mechanics and drivers to planners, schedulers and administrators. This is an industry that is poised for growth but that growth will require a dynamic workforce."



Doran Barnes

Representatives from universities, public transit agencies, consulting companies and other organizations interested in a healthy public transportation industry attended. "This issue is crucial for all communities. Meeting growing

(Summit continued on page 2)

Bruce Lindholm of the South Dakota Department of Transportation says the link between transit and economic development needs to be explored and documented. “If we go into a community, especially for airport projects, no one ever asks if it’s good for our community. When transit asks for local match, it’s often seen as a cost to the community not a benefit. Often it’s said, we’re not going to win an argument saying that rural transit is economic development, but do we really know?”



Keven Anderson

Several advisory board members said technology may be helpful in improving mobility for residents in rural and small urban areas. Keven Anderson of the Minnesota Department of Transportation suggested that technology could enhance participation in ride-share programs. “There isn’t any readily accessible place where you can go and log on to see if anybody else is interested except for the bulletin board at the Laundromat. There should be some way of reaching those folks technologically.”

Radio frequency identification (RFID) technology could be used to help carpoolers track rides and assist with record keeping. Lyn Hellegaard of the Montana Transit Association said some communities could use the technology to facilitate the use of “slug lines,” a form of impromptu carpooling that is often used in more urban areas.

Ryan Marshall of the Utah Urban and Rural Specialized Transportation Association noted the need for low-cost technology solutions aimed at smaller transit agencies. Those agencies may not need the complex systems implemented in large urban agencies, but they do have a need for technology that improves service while reducing costs.



Ryan Marshall

The bottom line, the members agreed, was to maintain or expand transit services while keeping costs in check. The challenge is to maintain customer satisfaction. Jim Moench, North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium, suggested that SURTC could develop a method for assessing rider

satisfaction that agencies could easily adapt for their own use.

“Each year we look to our advisory board to help us stay connected with the transit industry at all levels,” noted SURTC director Jill Hough. “Their ideas are always insightful and help us ensure that our programs are directed to important issues and needs.”

In addition to the brainstorming and idea-sharing sessions, SURTC researchers presented an overview of recently completed and on-going research. Guests offered regional and national perspectives on transit-related developments.

Other attendees included:

- Ron Baumgart, River Cities Public Transit, Pierre, SD
- Julie Bommelman, Metropolitan Area Transit, Fargo, ND
- Joe Dougherty, Cheyenne Transit Program, Cheyenne, WY
- Bruce Fuchs, North Dakota Department of Transportation
- B. Leone Gibson, Utah Department of Transportation
- Mary Leary, Easter Seals Project ACTION
- Lori Van Beek, Metropolitan Area Transit, Moorhead, MN
- Paul Benning, North Dakota Department of Transportation
- Charles Dickson, Community Transportation Association of America
- Joseph Niegowski, American Public Transportation Association
- Ryan Aasheim, Senator Dorgan’s office
- Gene Griffin, UGPTI, Director

(Summit continued)

demand for workers in public transportation will require innovative approaches,” Hough says.

The goal of the summit was to bring together interested persons in public transportation to dialogue on workforce development needs and actions. The summit addressed the following questions:

- Who will lead public transit into the future?
- Who will plan the next generation of transit systems?





Polly Kloster

John English

Doran Barnes

- Who will be the transit professionals of tomorrow?
- Where will we find these professionals?

Keynote speakers included:

- Doran Barnes with Foothill Transit in West Covina, CA. Barnes is also vice-chair for human resources with the American Public Transit Association. He described workforce issues within the transit industry and outlined APTA's workforce development efforts.
- John M. English of the Utah Transit Authority in Salt Lake City. English outlined growth of the UTA and described steps the agency is taking to meet its workforce needs.
- Polly Kloster, chair and professor in the Department of Nursing at Concordia College in Moorhead, MN. Kloster described similarities between the workforce challenges faced by transit and those faced recently by the nursing field. She also outlined strategies used to boost the nursing workforce and suggested similar strategies could be used in the transit industry.



Joung Lee moderating student panel

A response panel of sponsors, agency officials and industry experts provided reactions to the keynote speakers, adding their unique perspectives on workforce development efforts in transit and providing a broader context to set the stage for afternoon discussions. The response panel was moderated by Joung Lee of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and included Joseph Niegoski, American Public Transportation Association; Lydia Mercado, USDOT's Research and Innovative Technology



Joseph Niegoski, Lydia Mercado, Charles Dickson

Administration; Charles Dickson, Community Transportation Association of America; and Vincent Valdes, USDOT FTA Office of Research Demonstration and Innovation.

Participants heard from a panel of students about their impressions of possible careers in transit, what they are looking for in careers, their use of technology, and how they look for jobs. Breakout sessions allowed representatives from government, education, industry and other organizations to brainstorm solutions and approaches to meeting the need for workers in public transit.

Presentations are available at <http://www.surtc.org/workforcesummit/>.

The final report will be available in summer 2010. Co-sponsors of the summit were the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials, American Public Transportation Association, Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA), the Council on University Transportation Centers, the Federal Transit Administration, and the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center.



RESEARCH

Research assesses existing and needed community transportation for ND disabled

The transportation needs and the mobility of people with disabilities are being investigated in a study led by SURTC researcher Jeremy Mattson.

“Mobility is fundamental for people to live full and satisfying lives in their communities,” Mattson says. “With community mobility, people have opportunities for employment, civic involvement, health care, shopping, socialization, and participation in community activities. Without it, people experience isolation and depression. For adults with disabilities, access to community transportation is often very limited.”

While the need to improve mobility for disabled individuals is increasingly being recognized, moving forward requires current and accurate information about transportation services used and needed. To that end, SURTC is surveying people with disabilities across North Dakota via mail,



photo credit: Hanson Photography

phone, and the Internet. By using multiple methods, the researchers hope to reach a broad range of people with disabilities across the state. The survey asks questions about the ability of people with disabilities to make needed or desired trips, use of community transportation options such as buses, and unmet needs or difficulties encountered.

With information from this study, state, regional, county and local public and private transportation and human service agencies will be able to assess their existing transportation services, identify gaps and needs, and plan improvements.

Another goal of the study is to create a survey instrument that could be used over time to assess progress in providing transportation for adults with disabilities in the state and could also be used by communities and states beyond North Dakota for collecting similar information.

Implementation plan prepared in needs-driven Southwest Demonstration study



Dave Ripplinger

SURTC is continuing to facilitate efforts to innovate and coordinate student and public transportation in southwest North Dakota. An implementation plan and final report for the Southwest Demonstration Project, the effort to improve transportation efficiencies and service in the

region, was recently completed by SURTC. This report outlines the planning and design needed to initiate the project and is complemented by concept of operations and system requirements documents.

“The Southwest Demonstration Project is motivated by a number of local needs. Key among these is the need to leverage existing local transportation resources to meet the diverse mobility needs of the area’s residents,” notes SURTC researcher Dave Ripplinger.

The project will serve the eight counties of southwest North Dakota where the issue of personal mobility is intensified by regular long-distance, high-cost trips. “Student transportation dwarfs the level of service provided by other transportation agencies in this area, and for many



non-students, there is little or no transportation service available,” Ripplinger says. “Currently, there is little coordination among public transportation providers, and the use of technology is limited.”

The report considers different alternatives for coordinating student and public transportation and recommends a fully integrated school-public transportation system which would allow any member of the public to utilize the school district’s fixed-route service. Plans call for the project to be phased into operation initially in Dickinson and surrounding areas and then expanded into the eight-county region of southwest North Dakota.

The operational plan prepared by SURTC identifies the key, non-rider stakeholders involved with the Southwest Demonstration Project and their roles and responsibilities with respect to the system. It also lays the foundation for the new system design, including a tripper service and its coordination with other transportation services in the region. Finally, the operational plan presents the tasks, timeline, and budget for the project.

The report also presents a technical plan, outlining the strategies, budget, and timelines for technology related portions of the project. The Southwest Demonstration technology system provides five core functions: reporting and billing, tracking, traveler information, fare management, and scheduling. According to the technical strategy, technologies will be implemented to help achieve the project’s goals of sustainability, coordination, accessibility, reliability, and safety.

Interest in the project has been strong at both the state and local level. Ripplinger notes that “the motivation for and the energy behind the project have all originated at the local level.” Key local stakeholders, including the public transportation provider in Dickinson, Dickinson Public Schools, and the City of Dickinson have formed the vision and process. The state DOT has been involved with the project at all stages.

Study of small city sprawl suggests transit should play bigger role in urban planning

A study conducted by SURTC researcher Del Peterson recommends that transit agencies in small urban communities be more actively involved in the city’s land-use planning process to deal with issues of sprawl.

“Small urban sprawl has resulted in new housing developments and business centers that have never been served by transit,” Peterson says. “Unfortunately, transit agencies are often not included in the land development process within small urban communities.”

Peterson surveyed transit agencies in small urban areas across the country to determine what steps these transit providers are currently taking to integrate transit service into sprawling communities and to determine what can be done to improve relationships with local governments during the land development planning process. Thirteen transit agencies in areas with metropolitan populations ranging from 50,000 to 200,000 responded to the questionnaire. Case studies were developed for four of these small urban communities.



Del Peterson

The study found that involvement in land-use planning varies widely from one community to the next. For some, the level of involvement includes meetings, planning activities, or personal networks, while for others there is no involvement and no communication with local city planners.

Many transit agencies in these communities believe it is not feasible to implement new services in these new developments. Only four of 13 questionnaire respondents indicated they felt sufficient demand existed for fixed-route transit within their new developments, possibly due to low densities. Transit agencies also responded that even if sufficient demand existed, the finances are often not available to extend service beyond its current structure.

The research makes the following recommendations for transit agencies when dealing with land use issues: take an active role during the planning process; make planners aware of the benefits of transit to new developments; express that communities who adequately fund transit have seen promising results; and make citizens aware of transit and how to use it.

To view the study, go to www.surtec.org and click on “research reports” in the drop-down menu under “resources.” The report title is “Transit and Small Urban Sprawl.”



Study to examine how public transportation influences health care access



Jeremy Mattson

A new study is underway to examine how access to public transportation influences access to health care in North Dakota. There is significant evidence that health care utilization is generally lower in rural areas compared to urban areas. These differences could be due to a number of reasons,

such as differences in the number of physicians available, possible differences in individual characteristics between rural and urban people, and the longer travel distances and fewer transportation options available for people in rural areas.

The distances to regional health care centers can often be great, especially in the most rural areas. “While long travel distance makes trips to medical care burdensome, lack of transportation makes those trips impossible. In rural areas where travel distances are longer and access to alternative modes such as transit is less prevalent, transportation becomes a vital issue for access to health care,” says SURTC researcher Jeremy Mattson.

If providing transportation to health services for those who lack it increases the utilization of these services, there could be cost benefits in terms of reduced need for emergency care and preventable hospitalizations.

The study will measure the impact of public transportation on access to health care services in rural and small urban areas. It will attempt to identify areas where there is a demand for more public transportation and ways in which the service could be enhanced to improve access to health care.

A survey is being conducted to gather data on how distance from health care providers impacts individuals’ ability to access health care services, and how public transportation can improve their ability to obtain health care.

SURTC receives public transportation participation grant

SURTC was recently awarded a Public Transportation Participation pilot program (PTP) grant from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Winning projects will evaluate the benefits of employing an integrated system of technologies and practices designed to improve public participation in the public transportation planning process.

“SURTC’s project will investigate the impact of technology in reducing barriers to individual participation and increasing planning efficiency,” says SURTC researcher Dave Ripplinger. The demonstration project will be conducted in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area.

Technologies studied will include the use of mobile electronic devices for conducting on-vehicle rider surveys; social networking tools for notifying individuals of opportunities to participate in planning activities and disseminating planning documents; an electronic transportation survey for collecting information relevant to current and future transportation issues; webcasts for off-site attendees to be able to view and comment on a series of public meetings discussing transit issues; and public online chats for further discussing transit issues.

“The project’s findings will be made available online so that anyone with an interest in transit planning and technology can benefit,” notes Ripplinger. A project website will serve as the effort’s electronic hub. Project developments and findings, including task reports, videos of public meetings, and archived chats will be posted on the site. Users will be able to comment on most-posted items. The website will also include a project that will describe recent and upcoming events in addition to providing context to posted items.

The Public Transportation Participation Pilot Program is an FTA research program that develops innovative approaches to improving public participation in planning activities.



Survey assesses technology adoption by transit systems

A nearly completed SURTC study is examining the adoption of new technologies by small urban and rural transit systems.

“The decision to adopt a technology relies upon the expectation that its benefits will exceed its costs,” notes SURTC researcher Dave Ripplinger. To assist individual transit agencies in quantifying the costs and benefits of a specific technology, demonstration projects have been conducted throughout the United States, many with the support of the Federal Transit Administration. At the same time, the U.S. Department of Transportation has expended considerable effort to support the advancement of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to increase the likelihood of success for transportation agencies in planning, developing, operating, and maintaining technology systems.



These efforts have largely been successful, but in spite of this, there is little information available regarding which transit agencies have adopted which technologies or whether certain agencies are more likely to adopt certain technologies. “There is no formal, refined understanding of the factors that drive the technology adoption process by transit agencies,” Ripplinger says.

He is surveying small urban and rural transit agencies with the objectives of assembling a publicly available database on existing and planned use of technology by transit agencies that receive Section 5311 funding, calculating simple statistics on technology use, and rigorously investigating the relationship between agency and environmental factors that impact the adoption of technology. “These data and findings will serve as valuable tools for policymakers and researchers involved with transit technology issues and projects,” comments Ripplinger.

SURTC leads legislative study on coordination



Jon Mielke

More mobility for more people while making the best use of funds directed to transit is the focus of a new study authorized by the 2009 North Dakota Legislature.

Through an RFP process, the North Dakota Department of Transportation selected SURTC to conduct the study which includes establishing two pilot coordination projects in the state. The focus of the study is to identify ways that public transportation can be better coordinated to improve mobility for residents and assure that the limited federal and state money directed at transit is spent most efficiently.

“This is not an effort to force transit providers to consolidate and regionalize their services,” notes SURTC researcher Jon Mielke. “It is an effort to identify ways that they can better work together to most efficiently use resources to reach the largest number of individuals.” Mielke is collaborating with Carol Wright, SURTC’s associate director of training and outreach, and other SURTC staff on the project.

The study comes as federal funding agencies are continuing to encourage coordination among transit agencies and human service agencies that provide mobility services to their clients. As a part of those federal initiatives, SURTC has conducted several studies related to coordination of transit among rural and small-urban providers.

“That experience with coordination made SURTC a good candidate to conduct this project,” notes SURTC director Jill Hough.

The legislation directed that two pilot projects be established to look at regions in the state: one with a city of more than 35,000 residents, and one with a smaller city. The goal is to identify both barriers to transit coordination as well as ways that transit-providing agencies could coordinate their efforts.

The researchers are now reviewing information from across the country on coordination efforts. They are examining academic projects as well as transit agency efforts to coordinate their services. The review will help establish a list of techniques

(Coordination Study continued on page 8)



and strategies that can be employed in North Dakota. The review will also help researchers identify potential pitfalls to avoid and challenges that need to be addressed.

A technical advisory committee will guide the overall effort. In addition, regional steering committees will be established for each of the pilot projects. One project will focus on the south central region (Jamestown/Valley City), and the other will focus on the west central region (Bismarck area). "The committees will be critical to our effort," Mielke notes. "They will help gather and disseminate information, set the research agenda for each project, host public input meetings, and review research findings and recommendations.

Based on the literature review and the experience of the pilot projects over the coming months, researchers will develop a report that identifies several approaches to transit coordination that could be employed in areas across the state. That report will be presented to the 2011 N.D. Legislature for review. Mielke says the report will likely include recommendations for the legislature to consider in regard to legislative changes that remove roadblocks to coordination or that enhance the ability of transit providers to work together.

"We will continue to monitor activity related to the report and coordination during the legislative session and develop a revised report after the end of the session," Mielke says. "That report will serve as a road map for planning regions or agencies to use as they explore ways to coordinate their services."

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TAKES US THERE

economy ► environment ► energy ► quality of life

EDUCATION

SURTC staffers give presentations in seminar series

SURTC staff members have again contributed to the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute's Transportation Seminar Series over the past academic year. The seminar series provides helpful updates on transportation research and issues at the local, regional and national level. The series is focused on educating Ph.D. students in the Transportation and Logistics program as well as students in the Master's in Managerial Logistics at NDSU, but is open to the public. For more information on the series including PowerPoint presentations from past seminars, go to <http://www.ugpti.org/events/seminar/>

SURTC contributions to the series:

- Jill Hough presented "Ethics in Transportation" April 29. She discussed some of the ethical concerns that arise in regard to transportation and in everyday decision making. She also provided tools for addressing those issues and situations.
- Del Peterson presented "Ride or Relocate." In his Mar. 4 seminar, he examined the cost of living at home and riding transit in North Dakota versus relocating to an assisted living facility. Special attention was paid to three different living situations including homeowners with and without mortgages as well as apartment dwellers.
- Carol Wright presented "The Changing Face of America: Diversity and Its Implications for Public Transit." In her Feb. 18 presentation, she examined the dramatic shift in America's population with regard to color and age and presented information to help participants understand the magnitude of existing and emerging American diversity.
- Dave Ripplinger presented "Regionalizing Public Transportation." His Feb. 4 seminar presented considerations for regionalizing public transportation and offered models of regionalization and an evaluation framework for identifying preferred regionalization alternatives.



He also described the role of the economic characteristics of transit agencies on regionalization alternatives.

- Jeremy Mattson presented “An Assessment of Demand for Rural Intercity Transportation Services in a Changing Environment” on Jan. 28. The objective of his study is to determine the attitude of would-be passengers in their choice of mode and the factors determining their choice in rural and small urban areas. The results can be used to show how demand for different modes will change with changes in demographics and economic conditions.
- Jill Hough presented “Transportation and Workforce Development.” Her Dec. 8 presentation outlined the changing demographics as ‘baby-boomers’ enter retirement and discussed transportation workforce needs as well as strategies for attracting and preparing the next generations of transportation personnel.
- Dave Ripplinger’s presentation, “How to Conduct a Review of a Peer-Reviewed Journal Article,” on Oct. 13 described the peer review process and

the role and responsibility of peer reviewers. He also offered tips and considerations to ensure that reviews are done well.

- Del Peterson presented “Transit and Small Urban Sprawl.” His Sept. 29 presentation described a study to determine what steps small urban transit providers are currently taking to integrate transit service into sprawling communities, and to determine what can be done to improve relationships with local governments during the land development planning process.
- Jon Mielke presented “Generating Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making” on Sept. 22. His seminar discussed a recent initiative undertaken by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute to generate public involvement in transportation decision making and subsequent efforts to share research findings with key elected officials.
- Carol Wright’s presentation, “Improving Your Writing Skills,” on Sept. 15 reminded participants of the commonly broken rules and offered tips to help them avoid some of the most frequent errors.



Linda Bohlinger (APTF Chair) and Marc Scott

Scholarship renewed for SURTC grad student

SURTC graduate research assistant Marc Scott was awarded a renewal of his scholarship from the American Public Transportation Foundation. The foundation awards scholarships to increase and retain the number of young professionals entering the public transportation field as a career. The scholarship renewal was presented in October. Scott has a 4.0 grade point average and is pursuing a doctorate in transportation and logistics.



TRAINING

SURTC training efforts continue to grow

The Small Urban & Rural Transit Center's Training and Outreach Programs have grown dramatically over the past year. The demand for our training programs and services is growing along with our reputation in the industry as a "Center of Excellence."

Over the past year, SURTC staff traveled to 18 states (several more than once) and conducted 6 three day courses, 21 workshops/training sessions, and 18 individual presentations, plus provided PASS training to dozens of bus drivers in North Dakota and South Dakota. In addition, they field phone calls and answer email requests on a daily basis, giving them the opportunity to serve as a national resource for small urban and rural transit related issues.

Transit management course gets new name, continues to be popular

Introduction to Transit Management debuted in 2008 (with a pilot project provided to the Alaska Department of Transportation and their transit providers in the fall of 2007). After receiving feedback from attendees, the class was renamed Principles of Transit Management and is marketed to include transit managers with multiple years of experience.

The three-day course features eight modules covering all elements of basic transit management including: human resource management, financial management, administration, operations and service design, procurement, vehicle and facility management, safety/security/emergency management, and drug/alcohol compliance. The 300+ page course manual features an extensive resource section, and the class participants each receive 5 CDs to assist them in personalizing the class materials for their own transit agencies.

The course has been taught in North Dakota, South Dakota, Texas, Rhode Island, Colorado, Oregon, and Minnesota. The course was developed by Carol Wright. Future plans include the development of an advanced transit management course.

Several states, including Texas, Colorado, and Oregon have arranged for multiple sessions in various locations. The class will be offered as a 3-day pre-conference intensive at the 2010 Community Transit Association of America (CTAA) Expo in Long Beach, CA, in May.

In 2010, SURTC is already booked to teach the class at least once per month from January through June and again in September. States where it will be presented include Oregon, Minnesota, Texas, Alaska, and California.

SURTC staff are also exploring the potential of offering a version of the course specifically for tribal transit managers. They are assessing what modifications may be needed to the course's curriculum to make it more responsive to the needs of tribal transit systems. Jon Mielke presented information on SURTC and the Principles of Transit Management course at a Tribal Transportation Planners Conference held in conjunction with the United Tribes Tribal Leaders Summit Conference in Bismarck in September 2009 and at the 2009 Intertribal Transportation Association Conference in Las Vegas, NV in December.

SURTC develops diversity course

As the nation faces dramatic demographic changes in the coming years with millions of baby boomers



Al Abeson

approaching retirement, the nation's transit agencies will need to adapt both in the way they serve customers and recruit and retain workers.

To help agencies plan for those transitions, Al Abeson, SURTC affiliated faculty and retired director of Easter Seals Project ACTION, and Carol Wright,

SURTC's associate director for training and outreach, developed a one-day training course, "Diversity - the Changing Face of America: Implications for Public Transit."

"In many areas of the country, various minority groups exceed the number of caucasian people living there," Wright notes. "At the same time, the growth in the number of elderly continues to escalate and those individuals are living more active lifestyles, are aging in place and have a high demand for mobility. Similarly, disabled individuals



are more often employed and participate in other activities that require mobility.” All of these factors have large implications for transit providers.

In the course, practical instruction is combined with participant exercises to help transit providers:

- Understand the magnitude of existing and emerging American diversity,
- Adhere to the fundamental requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,
- Recognize discriminatory beliefs and attitudes,
- Overcome communication barriers with people who speak limited English,
- Provide effective customer service to older adults and people with disabilities, and
- Develop appropriate agency policies.

The course was presented to Texas transportation managers at an event sponsored by the Texas Department of Transportation in January.

SURTC and NTI develop technology course for rural transit

In cooperation with the National Transit Institute, SURTC has developed a two-day course, “Implementing Rural Transit Technology.”

This course is geared for transit professionals, state DOT office staff, and regional planners involved in planning and implementing technology-based applications for rural transit operations. SURTC researcher Dave Ripplinger co-developed the course. He noted that technology can transform scheduling and dispatching operations, provide new levels of customer service, and support innovative business practices. However, the process for planning and implementing appropriate technology-based applications can be challenging.

“This course presents a structured approach for planning, implementing, and evaluating rural transit projects to help ensure that agency needs and expectations are met,” he says.

By the end of this course participants will be able to:

- Assess agency performance and develop operational objectives
- Identify technology-based solutions for meeting agency objectives
- Conduct cost-benefit analyses to prioritize projects
- Develop a project plan

- Review traditional and innovative funding sources for technology projects
- Discuss project implementation and management strategies
- Evaluate project effectiveness in meeting agency objectives

Ripplinger participated in an NTI curriculum development committee nearly two years ago. “It was evident that there was a disconnect between rural transit operators and technology use and we began discussing ways to address that.”

As a result, the course was launched in June 2009 with a pilot offering in Fargo. The course was attended by 32 participants consisting of transit agency managers and State DOT transit project managers mainly from North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. Since then the course has been offered in New York, California and Wisconsin. The course is being revised based on feedback from participants and is scheduled for Anchorage, AK, in May and Charlottesville, VA, in June.

NCST is partner in business plan training

Accountability for public dollars and a constant demand to do more with less is compelling transit agencies to look more closely at how they operate. To address that need, the National Center for Senior Transportation (NCST) and SURTC are partnered in an effort to provide business plan training to transit agencies.



Nic Gray and Linda Leuckel, Services Programs for Aging Needs, Denton, TX.

(NCST continued on page 12)



(NCST continued)

"More than ever, agencies need to view themselves as businesses and hold themselves to business standards," notes Carol Wright, SURTC's associate director for training and outreach.

After receiving frequent requests from agencies wanting to move to the next level of planning and development, the NCST partnered with SURTC to offer Business Plan Development Training.



Jim Miller

The 3-day class was held in August for nine, two-person teams. Participating transit agencies were from Minnesota, Oklahoma, California, North Carolina, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Kansas. NCST paid all expenses for participants and team members. SURTC affiliated

faculty Jim Miller led the class while Wright and SURTC training coordinator Gary Hegland served as facilitators and provided individualized assistance.

Core components of the business plans developed during the training include:

- System background and history
- Organization and governance
- Market for public transportation
- Evaluation of current services, operations, vehicles, and facilities
- System mission, vision, goals, and objectives
- New and expanded service options
- Five-year operating and capital budget plan



Judy Salvagni (l) and Linda VanBuskirk (r), The Dale Association, Inc., Lockport, NY.

"During the early part of the class we develop a framework for an agency's business development plan," Wright says. "Then as we move forward, the participants are able to fill in the details with information from their own agencies." A completed business plan will help agencies plan for the next three to five years, providing benchmarks for measuring progress as well as identifying challenges and opportunities.

As an outgrowth of the relationship with NCST, Wright will serve as an instructor for a free audio distance education event for human service transit providers in April, "Cost Allocation for Human Service Agencies that Provide Transportation." Wright and Jed Johnson, director of the NCST, will review the principals of cost allocation for human service agencies that provide transportation services.

OUTREACH

SURTC launches blog

As SURTC strives to improve its outreach activities and provide a greater variety of valuable and current information in an accessible format, we have launched the SURTC Blog. The intent of the blog is to facilitate the dissemination of information and dialogue on small urban and rural transit topics.

The blog keeps readers up-to-date on the training and research being conducted by SURTC staff. In addition, the blog endeavors to be a valuable resource for news and information pertaining to the world of small urban and rural transit. Included are posts about upcoming training, SURTC events, completed or ongoing research projects, industry news of significant events that impact small urban and rural transit, and other newsworthy topics we would like to share with you.

You can follow the blog by visiting the SURTC website at www.surtc.org. Posts appear in the news and events box located on the site's home page. You can also visit the blog directly at www.surtc.org/blog. For greater convenience, you can have posts sent straight to your inbox through our e-mail subscription, or you can follow the SURTC



Blog with a RSS reader by using our RSS feed. For more information about our e-mail subscription or RSS feed, contact Dave Ripplinger by phone at 701-231-5265 or by e-mail at david.ripplinger@ndsu.edu.

Hough chairs planning committee for Rural and Intercity Bus Conference



Jill Hough

SURTC director Jill Hough is chair of the planning committee for the 19th National Rural and Intercity Bus Conference to be held October 24-27, 2010, in Burlington, Vermont.

The conference is designed to address key rural public and intercity bus transportation

themes including accessibility; rural transit policy and planning; alternative fuels; intelligent transportation systems and rural transit; regional systems; networks and coalitions; operations, safety, and security; and tribal transportation. The deadline for submitting paper proposals was Dec. 30. Planners are now selecting papers and other presentations in order to finalize the program

Hough says the meeting is held every other year and draws about 400 people. "It's an opportunity for education and networking and a chance to gain some fresh ideas and perspective on what's happening in the industry."

Wright named to FTA's Bus Safety and Security Program Working Group



Carol Wright

Carol Wright was chosen to serve on the national Bus Safety and Security Program Working Group for the Federal Transit Administration. The working group was established to improve program coordination and feedback on technical assistance materials before they are sent to a wide-scale audience. It consists of

representatives from FTA, AASHTO, APTA, and CTAA, as well as representatives from industry organization committees and sub-committees, bus transit agencies, state Departments of

Transportation, and from Federal partners, including the National Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). This program has launched its website (<http://bussafety.fta.dot.gov>) and is in the process of its rollout of state-by-state orientation sessions at this time. SURTC will host the North Dakota orientation session for all North Dakota transit providers in August 2010.

SURTC staff participate at TRB

Three SURTC staff members participated in the Transportation Research Board's 89th Annual Meeting January 10-14 in Washington, D.C. The meeting included more than 3,000 presentations in nearly 600 sessions addressing topics of interest to all attendees – policy makers, administrators, practitioners, researchers and representatives of government, industry, and academic institutions.

Jill Hough, chaired a meeting of the Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Conference Planning Subcommittee. That group is preparing for its annual meeting in Vermont in October.

Jeremy Mattson presented "Assessment of Demand for Rural Intercity Transportation Services in a Changing Environment" as part of the Rural Transportation Research paper session hosted by the Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation Committee. The paper, co-authored by Del Peterson, Dave Ripplinger, William Thoms, and Jill Hough, investigates the impact of individual and trip characteristics on mode choice for rural intercity travel.

Dave Ripplinger presented "Classifying Rural and Small Urban Transit Agencies" in the Rural Transportation Policy paper session. The paper presents the motivation behind, methodology, and results of classifying transit agencies that serve rural and small urban areas. Ripplinger also chaired the paratransit subcommittee meeting on research.

Researchers' present papers at TRF Annual Forum

Two SURTC researchers, Jeremy Mattson and David Ripplinger, presented their research at the Transportation Research Forum's Annual Forum in Arlington, VA. The forum, held March 10-12, drew

(TRF continued on page 14)



(TRF continued)

100 transportation experts and students from academia, government and private industry. It is an interdisciplinary forum for the exchange of ideas related to all modes of transportation, focusing on both domestic and international issues.

Mattson presented “Assessment of Demand for Rural Intercity Transportation Services in a Changing Environment.” The paper investigates the impact of individual and trip characteristics on mode choice for rural intercity travel. Co-authors were Ripplinger, William Thoms, and Jill Hough.

Ripplinger presented, “Modeling Transit Technology Adoption.” The paper detailed results of a survey of small urban and rural transit agencies with the intent to assemble a public available database on existing and planned use of technology by transit agencies that receive Section 5311 funding. Bethany Brandt-Sargent, an NDSU student, was a co-author of the paper.

Hough appointed to APTA panel on workforce development

SURTC director Jill Hough was named to the American Public Transportation Association’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Workforce Development. The panel took a year-long look at workforce development issues facing transit agencies across the nation.

The panel, with a wide array of experience and expertise, was charged with:

- Reviewing the research and recommendations of the earlier workforce development initiative;
- Identifying gaps, new opportunities, programs and services geared to helping to create and sustain a stronger, vibrant, and efficient and effective workforce; and
- Defining APTA’s role in providing ongoing support to members and the industry on these issues.

Hough was named to the panel to provide leadership in addressing one of the panel’s focus areas: Higher education. The group looked at the

role of universities, transportation research centers, community colleges and technical schools in providing the pipeline for public transportation careers, and focuses on leveraging opportunities for development of core curricula in universities and community colleges.

The blue ribbon panel was charged with developing immediate, short-term, mid-term and longer term (five years and beyond) action plans. The unified multi-year work program was presented to the APTA Executive Committee in October 2009. The final report will be available summer 2010.

The work continued to strengthen SURTC’s relationship with APTA. Recently Hough was also named to the advisory board for Passenger Transport, APTA’s official bi-weekly publication. The new advisory board will serve as a sounding board for the editorial staff and will suggest innovative story ideas.

Ripplinger named to leadership post in TRF

SURTC researcher David Ripplinger was recently named vice president for membership of the Transportation Research Forum. The 250-member TRF is an independent organization of transportation professionals which provides an impartial meeting ground for carriers, shippers, government officials, consultants, university researchers, suppliers, and others seeking an exchange of information and ideas related to both passenger and freight transportation. As vice president for membership, Ripplinger will look for ways that the organization can bring value to existing and prospective members. “We want to assure that TRF continues to be a vibrant relevant organization,” Ripplinger says. “TRF has a strong track record, but any organization needs to continually recruit new members and reengage existing members.”



STAFF

Staff changes

As of Feb. 1, **Gary Hegland** became a self-employed consultant, providing services to transit agencies and the Dakota Transit Association. Gary had been at UGPTI since 2002, coordinating training and outreach for UGPTI. Gary played a significant role in building SURTC's training program and expanding its network of industry contacts. We look forward to collaborating with him in his new role.



Gary Hegland

Marsha Allahar began work in the spring of 2009 as an administrative assistant with SURTC. Marsha and her family recently moved to Idaho Falls, ID, where her husband has taken a new job. Marsha received her B.S. in sociology and management from the University of the West Indies and completed her MBA degree at NDSU in May. Before joining UGPTI, she was an academic

assistant in the Department of Criminal Justice and Political Science at NDSU for four years. In addition to being the first point of contact for many visitors to UGPTI, she provided administrative support to SURTC, including contract administration, accounting, publication development and other duties. Her people skills and administrative abilities will be missed.

Sarker is new graduate student

Mridula Sarker of Mymensingh, Bangladesh, is conducting research on terrorism/violence occurring on public surface transportation systems such as public buses and trains. Sarker received her bachelor's degree in 2000 and her master's degree in 2002 with a



Mridula Sarker

concentration in computer science from the Institute of Science and Technology in Bangladesh. In 2009, she received her master's degree in software engineering from NDSU. She plans to conduct research on system security plans and programs to protect passengers, employees, revenue, and property especially for small urban and rural transportation systems.

Events Calendar

APTA 2010 International Bus Roadeo

APTA 2010 Bus & Paratransit Conference

ITSA 2010 Annual Meeting & Exposition

CTAA EXPO 2010

Tribal Transit Conference

WYTRANS 2010 Annual Conference

ITSA 2010 National Rural ITS Conference

MPTA 2010 Annual Conference

URSTA Fall Conference

DTA 2010 Fall Conference

MTA Fall Conference

TRB 19th National Conference on Rural Public
& Intercity Bus Transportation

13th Annual National Tribal Transportation Conference

April 30-May 5, 2010 • Cleveland, OH

May 2-5, 2010 • Cleveland, OH

May 3-5, 2010 • Houston, TX

May 23-28, 2010 • Long Beach, CA

May 24-25 • Long Beach, CA

June 23-25, 2010 • Casper, WY

Aug. 1-4, 2010 • Huntington, WV

Sept. 13-15, 2010 • Rochester, MN

Sept. 17-18, 2010 • St. George, UT

Sept. 25-29, 2010 • Rapid City, SD

Oct. 13-15, 2010 • Billings, MT

Oct. 24-28, 2010 • Burlington, VT

Nov. 15-19 • Albuquerque, NM

Please check www.surtc.org for updates



Inside this issue . . .

SURTC Advisory Board provides research topic insight	1
SURTC hosts national summit on workforce development for public transportation	1
Research	4
Research assesses existing and needed community transportation ND for disabled	4
Implementation plan prepared in needs-driven Southwest Demonstration study	4
Study of small city sprawl suggests transit should play bigger role in urban planning	5
Study to examine how public transportation influences health care access	6
SURTC receives public transportation participation grant	6
Survey assesses technology adoption by transit systems	7
SURTC leads legislative study on coordination	7
Education	8
SURTC staffers give presentations in seminar series	8
Scholarship renewed for SURTC grad student	9
Training	10
SURTC training efforts continue to grow	10
Transit management course gets new name, continues to be popular	10
SURTC develops diversity course	10
SURTC and NTI develop technology course for rural transit	11
NCST is partner in business plan training	11
Outreach	12
SURTC launches blog	12
Hough chairs planning committee for Rural and Intercity Bus Conference	13
Wright named to FTA's Bus Safety and Security Program Working Group	13
SURTC staff participate at TRB	13
Researchers' present papers at TRF Annual Forum	13
Hough appointed to APTA panel on workforce development	14
Ripplinger named to leadership post in TRF	14
Staff	15
Staff Changes	15
Sarker is new graduate student	15
Events Calendar	15



Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute
NDSU Dept. 2880
PO Box 6050
Fargo, ND 58108-6050

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