

# SMALL URBAN & RURAL TRANSIT CENTER

# 2008 ANNUAL REPORT



UPPER GREAT PLAINS TRANSPORTATION INSTITUTE

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY



## Small Urban & Rural Transit Center

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## from the Director

Nationally, a spotlight was focused on transit this year. With record-setting fuel prices and economic concerns, more people than ever added public transit to their list of transportation options. As a result, transit ridership in the United States reached all-time highs.

Small urban and rural transit agencies have shared in the glow of this spotlight. Our agencies are exploring opportunities to accommodate more ridership and looking at ways to expand their services. At the same time, they are struggling to make ends meet as budget woes and fuel prices squeeze the bottom line.

As communication becomes more integrated with mobility, technology offers innovative opportunities for enhancing access to transportation. Meanwhile, long-term demographic trends continue to make themselves felt; small towns continue to get smaller and the remaining residents continue to get older.

Fortunately, the Small Urban & Rural Transit Center is well-positioned to address those opportunities and concerns. Our Advisory Board includes transit policy makers and operators who know the transit industry and have helped us develop research, education, outreach, and training programs that are uniquely directed at small urban and rural transit agencies.

This report reflects significant growth in our program. Our researchers are addressing more complex topics related to energy, technology, Native American transit programs, and transit planning. Our outreach and training efforts extend from involvement in national and regional planning committees to training sessions in places as diverse as Alaska and Iowa. With assistance from the USDOT's University Transportation Centers program, the academic component of our program is growing. Transit is an important part of the curriculum in transportation and logistics programs at NDSU, and the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute's Transportation Learning Network links us to academic programs across the region, giving our students access to classes at other institutions and allowing students there to enroll in transportation classes at NDSU. Graduate and undergraduate students are taking on a greater role in SURTC's research program.

While our programs are now national in scope, our focus remains on small urban and rural transit. Our roots in the Upper Great Plains assure that our programs will remain relevant and practical. At the same time, our growth will give our work greater depth and allow us to draw from a broader pool of experiences.

SURTC's talented staff has established a track record of responsive, high-quality work that transit agencies can use to improve the mobility of the people they serve. We're confident that work we've done will provide a firm foundation to address the challenges and opportunities of the future.

Thanks for reading.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Hough". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Jill Hough, Ph.D.

## Advisory Board Meeting Attendees, September 10, 2008



(L to R Front Row) Francis Ziegler, Jon Mileke, Jill Hough, Vincent Valdes, Lyn Hellegaard, Bruce Lindholm, Kathryn Harrington-Hughes, Susan Hendrickson;

(L to R Back Row) Jim Miller, David Ripplinger, Gene Griffin, David Leftwich, Ron Baumgart, Karen Wolf-Branigin, Charles Dickson, Audrey Allums, Al Abeson, Lori Van Beek, Rob Padgette, Julie Bommelman, Jeremy Mattson, B. Leone Gibson, Marc Scott, Carol Wright, Del Peterson, Bill Thoms, Keven Anderson, Pam Ternes, Ryan Marshall, Bruce Fuchs, Jim Moench, Gary Hegland.

## Transit leaders meet at NDSU

Officials from several local, state, and national transit organizations gathered at NDSU on Sept. 10 for SURTC's annual Advisory Board meeting (photo pg 2).

"This meeting is our opportunity each year to step back and ask our board members and clientele to provide feedback on what we're doing and offer ideas for what we should do next," said SURTC Director Jill Hough. The 30 participants also included state Department of Transportation officials and transit agency managers from North Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, South Dakota, and Utah.

"Caught between booming ridership and ballooning fuel costs, transit managers who are members of the advisory board suggested a number of proposals for research and outreach efforts. Their comments and suggestions will help shape the Center's agenda of activities for the coming year," Hough said.

# Transit Leaders

# SURTC news

"Transportation and transit are going to look very different in 5 to 10 years," noted NDDOT director Francis Ziegler. He pointed out that drivers are choosing more fuel-efficient vehicles in response to environmental concerns, and increasing fuel costs are resulting in reduced fuel consumption. That means gas taxes may no longer be the major source for transportation funding. Participants in the meeting cited several trends that are impacting transit in rural and small urban areas. Those include fuel costs, increased ridership, lagging public funding, and an increase in the number of elderly.

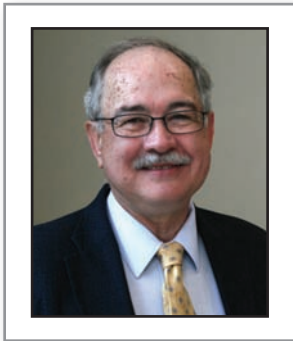
"I can see how cutting-edge a lot of this work is and how germane it is to transit across the country," noted Vincent Valdes, associate administrator of the Federal Transit Administration's Office of Research, Demonstration and Innovation in Washington, DC. Valdes complimented SURTC on a study of how rural communities and small urban areas can better make use of diverse transit resources.



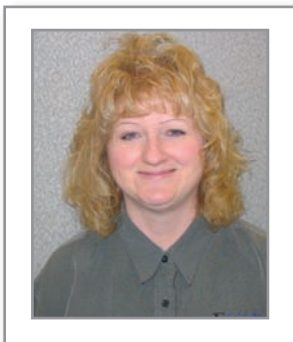
Vincent Valdes



Rob Padgette



Jim Moench



Julie Bommelman



Bruce Fuchs

He also cited SURTC research on how increased fuel costs impact transportation on American Indian reservations. “Those projects are directed at local issues, but can have an impact on a much broader scale. We have to think of both the local perspective and the global perspective of what we do.”

Other guests included Charles Dickson, associate director of the Community Transportation Association of America; Rob Padgette, director of policy and research for the American Public Transit Association; and Karen Wolf-Branigin, director of training and technical assistance for Easter Seals Project ACTION.

“Across the country, we’re seeing lots of smaller systems with double-digit growth in their ridership. Places where the economy is depressed and people are losing jobs are still seeing increases. That says a lot about mobility,” noted Padgette. “We need to say to our public officials, ‘We need help here.’ ” He noted that lawmakers, local officials, and others are frequently surprised to find that transit fares seldom cover transit costs. “They don’t understand that it costs a lot less to subsidize transit and let a person age in place rather than put them in a nursing home, or to subsidize a ride to work for someone who might otherwise not be able to work.”

“We’ve seen a 28 percent increase in ridership,” notes Julie Bommelman, transit administrator for the City of Fargo. “The publicity around that increase has been great, but people don’t realize that our costs have gone up much more than that.”

Several people at the meeting noted that with federal transportation legislation set to expire in 2009, the next federal transportation authorization will have a significant impact on how transit operations will be able to serve their clients.

“You can’t grow a business or an agency without investment,” noted Jim Moench, executive director of the North Dakota Disabilities Advocacy Consortium. “We need to be able to demonstrate the return on investment in transit, or at least the cost of not investing.”

“We have to get our constituency involved in the political process, or none of the items we talked about here will happen,” noted Bruce Fuchs, director of transit programs for the North Dakota Department of Transportation.



## FTA administrator visits MAT and SURTC

FTA Region 8 Administrator Terry Rosapep was in Fargo in September to visit Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Transit and SURTC. Rosapep provides executive direction for FTA's planning, operating, and capital programs in Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming. Rosapep was in the area to attend the annual Dakota Transit Association annual conference in Watertown, SD. He made the trip to Fargo to learn more about SURTC and MAT. "He was very pleased to see resources we've been able to invest in research, training and education programs focused on small urban and rural transit," noted Jill Hough.



Terry Rosapep

## SURTC leads research summit

The efforts of SURTC staff led to the development of a research agenda at a summit hosted by the National Resource Center for Human Service Transportation Coordination. SURTC researchers assisted in organizing the event, which was held in Washington, DC, Jan. 17, in conjunction with the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). SURTC staff members Jill Hough, David Ripplinger and Jim Miller led discussions on identifying research needs. The National Resource Center conducts research as part of its mission to promote mobility and the delivery of human service transportation to all individuals with disabilities, persons with low incomes, seniors, and youth. Based on the discussions at this meeting, SURTC staff authored the resulting research agenda which presented the identified, prioritized research topics in a uniform, accessible format. Attendees included representatives from industry, government, and academia.

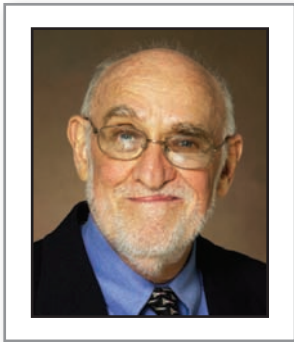
# National Research Summit

## SURTC receives award from River Cities Transit

SURTC was recently recognized with a "Friend of River Cities Public Transit," by the transit agency in Pierre, SD. In presenting the award, RCPT Executive Director Ron Baumgart recapped some of the collaboration between SURTC and RCPT. He specifically cited SURTC's work in helping the agency develop business and coordination plans, SURTC's training efforts, and the networking that SURTC has facilitated.

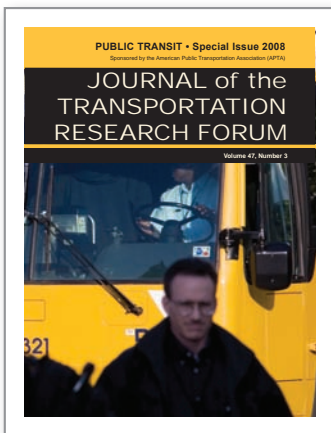


Ron Baumgart (l) presenting "Friend of River Cities Public Transit" award to Gary Hegland.



Al Abeson, Ed.D.

## Public Transit Exclusive



### Former Project ACTION Director Abeson joins SURTC

Dr. Al Abeson, who retired in October 2007 as Director of Easter Seals Project ACTION, has joined SURTC as an affiliate faculty member. Abeson will primarily assist with SURTC outreach and training programs related to serving individuals with disabilities or special needs. He will also be involved in research projects that focus on providing transit to the disabled. Affiliated faculty members are qualified to teach or serve on the committees of graduate students. They are often faculty in other departments or universities or have specialized knowledge and experience. While at Project ACTION, Abeson served on SURTC's Advisory Board. He was also the principal investigator for the National Center on Senior Transportation based at Easter Seals. During his career, he has worked extensively with many national transportation groups, disability organizations, and human service organizations. Before joining Project ACTION in 2002, he was the Executive Director of The Arc (formerly known as The Association for Retarded Citizens) of the United States for 15 years. With Easter Seals, The Arc and The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), he worked to advance transportation, education, and other opportunities for children and adults with disabilities through improved public policy. He holds master's and doctoral degrees in special education administration from Columbia University. He earned a B.S. from Ohio State University. "SURTC is delighted to have Al as an affiliated faculty and trainer," noted Jill Hough.

### JTRF special transit issue

Last year, public transportation in the United States had the highest ridership in the past 50 years. This year, ridership has increased even more. That makes a special issue of the Journal of the Transportation Research Forum especially timely. SURTC Director Jill Hough served as guest editor of the special edition of the journal which was published in September. Articles cover topics as diverse as the effects of gasoline prices on bus ridership to measures for transit network performance. Other topics include bus emissions and bus transit route design. Two of the articles were authored by SURTC staff. "The Effects of Gasoline Prices on Bus Ridership for Different Types of Transit Systems" was written by Jeremy Mattson, and "Hedonic Value of Transit Accessibility: An Empirical Analysis in a Small Urban Area" was co-authored by former associate research fellow Xinyu Cao and Hough.

# Workforce Development

## Hough named to APTA workforce panel

Dr. Jill Hough has been named to the American Public Transportation Association's Workforce Development Blue Ribbon Panel. The panel's first meeting was in early December in New York City. The one-year panel, representing public and private sectors of the public transportation industry, will review previous research and recommendations on workforce development and identify gaps, opportunities, programs, and services geared to ensuring a viable workforce for the future. "A qualified, competent workforce is essential to the success of transit operations across the country," Hough notes. "This industry-wide effort will help address this challenge for the future. While workforce development is a need across the industry, I hope to bring forward the key concerns of rural and small urban systems as well as represent higher education." Hough serves as chair of the panel's higher education working group.

## Improved transportation coordination endorsed at SURTC/AARP summit

Mobility for residents of North Dakota took a significant move forward in April 2008 with a pledge from Lieutenant Governor Jack Dalrymple to work to improve coordination among transit providers in the state. "The endorsement of this concept puts it on the front burner politically, and will help make it a priority across the state," noted SURTC Associate Director of Outreach and Training Carol Wright. The endorsement came during a Transit Coordination Summit April 9 in Bismarck. Wright and Linda Wurtz, associate state director for ND AARP, developed and facilitated the event. Speakers included: keynote speaker

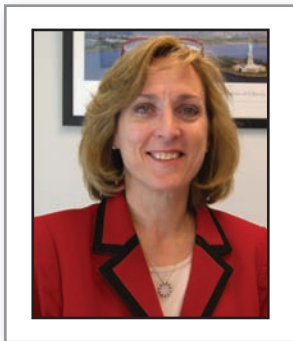


(L to R) Nancy Smith, AARP; Jeanne Erickson, United We Ride Ambassador; Janis Cheney, NDAARP; Jill Hough, SURTC; Ron Hynes, Federal Transit Administration; Al Abeson, Disability Advocate; Jon Mielke, SURTC; Dave Leftwich, NDDOT.



Linda Wurtz

## New Board Member



Mary Leary, Ph.D.

Dr. Alan Abeson, recently retired Director for Easter Seals Project ACTION in Washington, DC; FTA Interim Associate Administrator for Research, Demonstration, and Innovation Ron Hynes;; Nancy Smith, AARP National Policy Council; Jeanne Erickson, Region VIII Community Transportation Association of America United We Ride ambassador; ND Lieutenant Governor Jack Dalrymple; David Leftwich, North Dakota Department of Transportation; Jon Mielke, SURTC associate research fellow; Dr. Jill Hough,; and Janis Cheney, state director of ND AARP. Nearly 100 transit managers, county commissioners, state legislators, human service providers, department of transportation professionals, and others from North Dakota and South Dakota participated. The event focused on coordination from a national perspective; existing coordination efforts; North Dakota's commitment to coordinated transportation; the benefits that can be derived from coordinated efforts; and action steps for where we can go from here. Evaluations cited the importance of bringing the key players to the table. One participant commented, "This is just the kind of effort we need to bring together all organizations that move people and get them to communicate with one another to do the best job possible in serving people who depend on us to get them where they need to go. I applaud SURTC and AARP for their forward thinking and effort to put this summit together."

### Leary named to SURTC Advisory Board

Dr. Mary Leary of Easter Seals Project ACTION was named to the SURTC Advisory Board. Leary is senior director of Project ACTION & Transportation Initiatives. She joined Easter Seals in November 2007 after the retirement of Dr. Al Abeson who previously represented Project ACTION on the board. Leary leads Easter Seals Project ACTION, the National Center on Senior Transportation, and other transportation and mobility initiatives. She manages staff and represents the projects as a liaison to funding agencies, government, disability, aging, and transportation interests and other stakeholders on transportation activities. Before joining Easter Seals, she held a number of roles at the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration on Aging, including those of Special Assistant for the Assistant Secretary for Aging. She managed and developed program evaluation initiatives and furthered transportation and mobility needs of human services populations both within the department and across federal agencies with the United We Ride initiative. She has served on a number of advisory committees and has been an advocate and public speaker in the field of human services transportation.

In helping to set a strategic direction for the center, SURTC's Advisory Board has also provided vision for selecting research projects that provide critical information and analysis for rural and small urban transit programs. SURTC's outreach and training programs as well as staff interaction with transit professionals at federal and local levels also bring to light issues and challenges faced by transit providers and users. The research program has two major thrusts:

- 1 Addressing management and institutional issues faced by transit client groups
- 2 Exploring technical and operating issues with a special emphasis in the intelligent transportation systems arena

Many of SURTC's research reports are online at [www.surtc.org/research/reports.php](http://www.surtc.org/research/reports.php).

# Research

## Research addresses transit's role in small urban sprawl

"Transit's Role in Small Urban Sprawl," was launched in July and is currently in the survey stage. The effort is funded by the USDOT's University Transportation Centers program. Researcher Del Peterson hopes this project will provide concrete ways for small urban areas to address sprawl. The project will include small urban communities in SURTC's service region. Transit agencies are being surveyed to provide Peterson with data about the current adaptations transit has made to accommodate sprawl in the area. Peterson's research will hopefully determine steps that need to be taken by small urban transit providers to include the sprawl areas in their transit plan. Case studies of some test areas will be used to gain insight into the small urban sprawl and the effects on surrounding areas. The one-year study will help small urban transportation providers and planners across the country improve transit service growth in their communities.

## Transit Planning

## Mobility of the Elderly

### Researchers evaluate travel demand by mode in rural areas

Researchers are surveying residents in North Dakota and northwest and west central Minnesota to learn more about how they choose modes of transportation. The survey will cover automobile, bus, train, transit van, and air transportation and will gather information on how often respondents use each of these modes for trips of 30 to 500 miles. The researchers will ask questions related to gas prices, travel distances, travel times, fares, service frequencies, and the need for transfers. They will also gather demographic information and information on personal attitudes and preferences. The results will provide information regarding the need for different forms of transportation and how resources should be allocated to improve the intercity transportation system in the region. Affiliated faculty member William Thoms developed the initial idea for the research. He is assisting with the project along with SURTC Director Dr. Jill Hough and researchers Del Peterson, Jeremy Mattson and David Ripplinger. "If you look at changes in travel behavior, we may need to re-evaluate how resources are allocated to highways, rail, air, and transit in rural areas," Peterson said. "We want to make the best use of limited resources to provide the level of mobility required for a vibrant economy and a high quality of life." Analysis of the survey data is expected to be completed in the fall of 2009, and information from the study will help transportation planners and policy makers evaluate transportation investment decisions.

### Research published on mobility of elderly in rural areas



Two peer-reviewed papers written by SURTC Director Dr. Jill Hough were published in 2008 relating to the mobility of elderly women in rural areas. "Exploring Travel Behavior of Elderly Women in Rural and Small Urban North Dakota: An Ecological Modeling Approach," was published in *Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board*, No. 2082. Co-authors were former SURTC research associate Xinyu Cao and University of California-Davis researcher Dr. Susan Handy. The second paper, "Relative Desired Mobility of Elderly Women Living in Rural and Small Urban Locations in North Dakota" was published in *Proceedings from "Impact of Changing Demographics on the Transportation System Conference."* The paper is based on a presentation given by Hough during a Transportation Research Board-sponsored

conference in October. The work is aimed at helping researchers and policy makers assess the mobility needs of rural elderly women. The research showed that those with high levels of mental acuity and self-efficacy (confidence in their abilities) tend to have an easier time of accomplishing desired mobility.

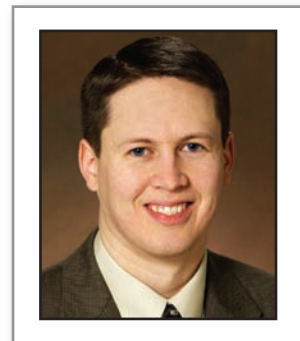
### **Study to assess impact of public transportation on access to health care**

A new SURTC study will examine how access to public transportation influences access to health care in North Dakota. "Access to transportation is a critically important aspect of health care use," notes Jeremy Mattson. "This is especially true in places like North Dakota where individuals often have to travel long distances to access health care services." The issue is compounded when a growing portion of residents in rural areas are older adults who may need increasing levels of health care services, while their ability to obtain transportation may be limited. A survey will be used to gather data on how distance from health care providers impacts individuals' ability to access health care services. It will also collect information on how access to public transit can improve their ability to obtain health care. Mattson will also identify areas that have a demand for more public transportation and will investigate ways in which transportation services could be enhanced. "As state agencies and transit providers make decisions about how to direct resources, this information will help them address a critical need among a growing number of North Dakotans," Mattson says. The project is funded by the USDOT's University Transportation Centers program and is expected to be complete by the fall of 2009.

### **Getting the most out of small urban and rural transit**

David Ripplinger is studying organization of public transportation services in small urban and rural communities in North Dakota. Public transportation services are as diverse as the areas they serve and can be very expensive. Diversity of services and tight budgets can often create challenges in overseeing and organizing transit services in nonmetropolitan areas. The study aims at providing state and regional administrators and policy makers with insight into how various forms of reorganization can help make the most of available resources. While this study focuses primarily on economic benefits, quality of service and preference for local providers are also main concerns. "The outcomes will provide insight into the most efficient organization of services, whether that is for each community to have its own

## **Access to Healthcare**



Jeremy Mattson

services, whether some communities would benefit from collaboration, or whether areas would benefit from regional services," Ripplinger said. Methods used in this study will be replicable in other states and can act as a useful guide for future research.

### **SURTC evaluates costs to ride or relocate**

The "aging tsunami" facing the United States in which more than one in five Americans soon will be 65 years old or older, poses particularly difficult public policy questions in rural locations where distances to services are greater, and the proportion of elderly is even larger. Del Peterson says a new SURTC study will attempt to quantify the cost of riding transit in rural areas of North Dakota versus relocating to larger communities. Peterson, Jill Hough, and graduate student Marc Scott are reviewing information associated with transit costs and the cost of moving to an assisted living center or a nursing home. They are drawing on the expertise of Pat Hansen, executive director at South Central Adult Services, which provides transit services for six counties in south central North Dakota. "Critics of publicly funded transportation argue that many of the aging population would be better off relocating to larger communities where desired services are more readily available," Peterson notes. "Public transportation proponents believe that it is more desirable

for aging Americans in rural areas to remain in their homes and utilize public transportation." The research will quantify the cost of riding transit versus relocating to the eight largest North Dakota communities. The research was undertaken at the suggestion of SURTC Advisory Board member Rob Padgette, director of policy development and Research for the American Public Transit Association (APTA). The USDOT's University Transportation Centers program is sponsoring the research.

### **Student attitudes and use of transit**

David Ripplinger continued to survey NDSU students on their attitudes toward transit and their use of campus and municipal transit services. The same group of students has been surveyed each of the past three years to monitor any changes in attitudes or behavior regarding transit. "The survey will allow us to be much more confident in determining why students do or don't use transit," Ripplinger says. In addition, the information will be useful as NDSU and other campuses look at enhancing and marketing transit services.



Del Peterson





## Revising ND's state transit management plan

SURTC Associate Director for Training and Outreach, Carol Wright, helped the NDDOT refine its statewide transit management plan to better reflect state-specific regulations and requirements for transit operations. The focus was on requirements for federal funding. The new version of the plan reflects NDDOT and other state regulations as well as updates to federal regulations. Every state is required by the Federal Transit Administration to have a statewide plan. The plan is a valuable tool for state officials as well as for transit managers to assure they are complying with requirements of their major funding providers.

## Research identifies technology for coordination project

Technology will play a key role in an effort among transportation providers in southwest North Dakota to coordinate their transportation resources. SURTC researcher David Ripplinger is assessing available technology and assembling a list of system requirements. The work is part of an effort, called the Roughrider Travel Management Coordination Center, to implement an innovative, community transportation system in the region that features improved coordination and use of intelligent transportation systems (ITS). The goal of the project is to improve the efficiency of transportation systems in the region including K-12 student transportation, public transit systems, and human service transportation providers. "The center will act as a mobility brokerage, matching riders with the appropriate service and as an information clearinghouse, providing timely, accurate information," Ripplinger says. Once the "architecture" of underlying technology has been identified, the next step will be to develop an implementation plan for the region. SURTC's portion of the project is expected to be complete by early 2009. The project working group includes members from the ND Department of Transportation and the ND Department of Public Instruction, as well as the Dickinson Public School District, the Dickinson City Council, and Elder Care, the local public transit provider.

# Transit and Technology



David Ripplinger

## **SURTC launches project to examine RFID passenger ID cards**



As small urban and rural transit providers adopt automated approaches to scheduling, dispatching, routing, and tracking of their vehicles, they are also recognizing the opportunities to automatically identify passengers when they board or depart from vehicles. Affiliated Faculty Dr. Jim Miller is working with River Cities Public Transportation in Pierre, SD, as well as technology vendors Shah Software and Greyhawk Technologies to add automated passenger identification systems to existing technology on buses. Smart cards and swipe cards are being considered along with radio frequency identification (RFID) cards. Although cost is a concern with the RFID cards, an advantage is that the cards can be read without contact from a driver or scanner. Often the cards can remain in a pocket, backpack, wallet or purse – an advantage when passengers are young students, have handicaps, or are elderly. The 21-month project will initially focus on modifying existing scheduling, dispatching, and on-board software to work with the ID cards. Miller will then use data to evaluate how well the cards work. The next phase of the project will evaluate if the cards can be used to store and record fare information. A final report will provide guidance for River Cities Public Transportation and other transit agencies that want to implement automated identification technology.

## **NDinfo.org is an online transportation service directory**

Through a contract with the NDDOT, SURTC developed a statewide online transportation service directory. The NDinfo.org website enables individuals to access information about available transit services across the state. Currently, SURTC researchers are updating database information on transit providers, adding route maps to the site, and developing a trip planner.



## Study identifies disparity in portion of income spent on fuel

A SURTC study on the relative impact that rising fuel prices have on Native Americans supports calls for alternative transportation options, particularly public transit, in areas with high Native American populations. The study was conducted in response to an Oil Price Information Service study that was reported in the New York Times. "In that study, there were no areas that had high populations of Native Americans," noted researcher Jon Mielke. "There were also some ways that we saw to improve on the original study." Mielke conducted the study with Jeremy Mattson and Dave Ripplinger. "Given the lack of transportation options other than personal vehicles, the distances involved, and the low incomes in these counties, we found that people in Native American counties spend a significantly higher portion of their income on transportation," Mielke said. "In one county, residents spent up to 30 percent of their income on vehicle fuel." Mattson notes that "Transit usage has risen dramatically with rising fuel prices, and many service providers have responded with increased service offerings. Rural areas, including Indian reservations, should not be overlooked regarding the need for new and expanded services to offset the negative impact of rising fuel prices." The information was presented to the American Public Transportation Association and to the National Tribal Transportation Conference.

# Native American Transit Study



## Rising gas prices and its effect on bus ridership

A 10 percent increase in gas prices can lead up to a 5 percent increase in transit ridership according to a study by researcher Jeremy Mattson, but so far, other factors, such as service changes, can influence ridership even more. "The increase in ridership brought about by the higher gas prices is not enough to cover the increased fuel expenses for transit agencies," Mattson says. "Travel behavior has generally not been too responsive to changes in gasoline prices, but as prices continue spiraling upward, motorists could become more responsive to the higher costs." Over the last several years, fuel expenses have been increasing at a rate of more than 20 percent per year for many transit systems, and the trend shows no sign of slowing. At the same time, fuel cost increases for motorists have prompted some to abandon their vehicles in favor of transit. In fact, ridership has been increasing for a number of transit systems across the country,

# Energy and Transit

# Alternative Fuels

including agencies of different types and sizes. Mattson's study analyzes data for small urban and rural transit systems in the region. The results of the study indicate that higher gas prices have led to increases in bus ridership, but other factors often have greater impacts, such as service changes or changes within the community that create increased demand for transit. Results indicate that a 10 percent increase in gas prices generally leads to an increase in ridership of about 1 percent to 2 percent, though in some cases, it is found to be as high as 5 percent.

## Biodiesel use in Fargo-Moorhead MAT buses

Buses operating on biodiesel in Fargo-Moorhead did not see a decrease in fuel efficiency, according to a study conducted by Del Peterson. Biodiesel's energy content is slightly lower than conventional diesel, but that factor was not reflected in fuel efficiency. Peterson also found the costs of operating buses on biodiesel are similar to those operating on conventional diesel. The benefits of biodiesel prompted Fargo Moorhead's Metropolitan Area Transit to begin using a biodiesel-mixed fuel in its buses in 2005. It is a domestically produced, renewable fuel that has been shown to reduce harmful emissions. Harold Pedersen, fleet services manager

for the City of Fargo, is a member of the city's renewable energy committee. "The committee felt it needed to be proactive in utilizing and helping promote renewable energy resources, and one area was to start using biodiesel throughout the city fleet." Peterson collected data from MAT for gas mileage and maintenance costs before and after the switch to biodiesel. While maintenance and repair costs had increased, the increases were most likely due to the aging of the buses and rising costs of parts and labor. "Using biodiesel can also have a

positive impact on marketing and public relations because the public generally holds a favorable view of the alternative fuel," Peterson says. "However, it's difficult to measure the effect that it might have on increasing ridership."



As transit systems grow, so do the challenges facing them. Budgets, competition, regulations, technology as well as changing demands and demographics are becoming more complex. SURTC's educational goals focus on developing tomorrow's transit professionals and equipping them to deal with those complex challenges.

# Education

## Transit class features national speakers

SURTC Director Dr. Jill Hough is the instructor for a graduate-level public transportation class at North Dakota State University. As often as possible, each of the weekly three-hour class periods features a theoretical section, a guest lecture from a professional in the transit industry, as well as a student seminar. "This class structure assures that we include the theoretical material, and the guest lecturers will focus on how that theory applies in the field," Hough noted. TL 786: "Public Transportation" will continue to be taught on campus and via the Transportation Learning Network, an interactive network that makes the course available to students at universities across the country. The course is sponsored by SURTC through the USDOT's University Transportation Centers program.

Robert Prince, Jr., a consultant and former manager of the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, Boston's transit system, is one of the guest lecturers. Prince recently advised President Barack Obama's transition team on transit issues. Other lecturers include former Easter Seals Project ACTION Director Dr. Al Abeson; FTA Associate Administrator for Research Demonstration and Innovation Vincent Valdes; American Public Transportation Association President Bill Millar; J. Barry Barker, executive director of the Transit Authority of River City in Louisville, KY; Michael Melaniphy, vice president public sector for Motor Coach Industries; Keven Anderson, project manager for the Minnesota Department of Transportation; Dr. Jim Miller, SURTC affiliate faculty and former faculty member at Pennsylvania State University and former director of the Mid-Atlantic University Transportation Center; Fargo City Planner Jim Gilmour; and Jeanne Krieg, chief executive officer of Eastern Contra Costa Transit in California. In

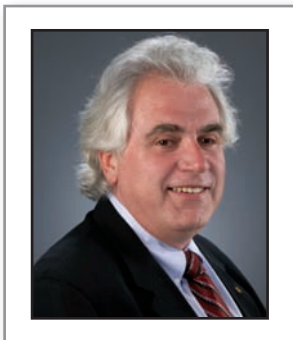


Michael Melaniphy, Robert Prince, Jr. and Jill Hough

## Student Internship



Marc Scott



J. Barry Barker

2008, the course prompted Marc Scott, a Ph.D. student in transportation and logistics from NDSU, to shift his emphasis from freight mobility to transit.

### **SURTC student gains transit expertise as intern**

Marc Scott, a Ph.D. student in Transportation and Logistics at North Dakota State University, gained a wealth of hands-on experience as an intern at the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, KY, during the summer of 2008.

He was placed in the intern position because of outreach activities conducted by SURTC. Through those activities, SURTC staff had developed a working relationship with the Transit Authority of River City. J. Barry Barker, executive director of TARC, was named 2007 Transit Manager of the Year by the American Public Transportation Association. "We felt that Marc could learn a lot from Barry and his agency," noted SURTC Director Dr. Jill Hough.

At NDSU, Scott is an enthusiastic student of transit. He shifted his Ph.D. focus from freight mobility to transit issues after a graduate course in transit taught by Hough, who now serves as his major professor in the transportation and logistics program. As a graduate assistant, Scott assists with SURTC research.

In Louisville, Scott worked on finance issues for the agency, developing spreadsheet models, investment analysis of various fleet purchase options, and developing reports and white papers for staff and administration. He also assisted with public meetings focused on proposed fee increases and service charges. The meetings ranged from a session with Louisville's mayor and a presentation to the Louisville Metropolitan Council to one-on-one visits with transit riders.

A study of potential public-private partnerships was also part of Scott's experience. In addition, he spent time with the agency's marketing department to learn how a transit agency communicates with its clients and helped with a ridership analysis to determine how well those clients' needs are being met.

"I was fortunate to be introduced to a very broad spectrum of transit issues and experiences," Scott says.

"Our goal with graduate students at SURTC is to expose them to transit and help them become tomorrow's leaders in the transit field," Hough notes. "With Marc's internship in Louisville, we were also able to help bridge the gap between research and issues challenging the industry. Marc now has a perspective that he would never have gained only at the university, and that perspective enriches our work."

## **SURTC to play role in new master's degree program**

SURTC will be participating in a new graduate program under development by the NDSU College of Graduate and Interdisciplinary Studies.

The proposed Transportation and Urban Systems program calls for two new degrees, a master of transportation and urban systems degree and a master of science in transportation and urban systems. The first degree is targeted at mid-career professionals and other candidates who do not wish to conduct advanced research. The second degree is aimed at individuals with strong research interests and capabilities.

The new degrees will be interdisciplinary in nature and will be part of the existing Transportation and Logistics program sponsored and coordinated by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. In addition to the UGPTI, the departments of Architecture and Landscape Architecture; Civil Engineering; Geosciences, Sociology and Anthropology, and Emergency Management; and Criminal Justice and Political Science will participate.

"If the United States is going to continue to progress economically and technologically, people with advanced knowledge in transportation are needed," notes Dr. Denver Tolliver, Associate Director of the UGPTI. "There is a critical shortage of people with that expertise now, and that shortage is expected to worsen in the future."

## **SURTC student presents award winning paper at conference**

SURTC student Marc Scott presented his award-winning paper, "Using Third Party Concept to Design Innovative Services to Foster Mobility and Access in Rural Areas through Partnership and Coordination," at the 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation held in Omaha, NE in October 2008. The paper addressed using outsourcing concepts and coordination to improve the cost effectiveness of programs and services. His paper placed second in the student paper competition sponsored by the Transportation Research Board, and he received a \$500 award and was reimbursed for conference registration fees and travel expenses.

# Masters Transportation and Urban Systems



SURTC director Dr. Jill Hough moderated a session featuring student paper competition winners at the National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation. She is pictured (l. to r.) with Craig Yannes, University of Connecticut; Marc Scott, North Dakota State University; and Chung-Jen Hsu, University of Nebraska.



Robert Prince Jr., AECOM transit consultant, Marc Scott, Jill Hough, and APTA president, Bill Millar.

### **Student wins APTF scholarship**

SURTC graduate research assistant Marc Scott was awarded a 2008 American Public Transportation Foundation Scholarship. The foundation awards scholarships to increase and retain the number of young professionals entering the public transportation field as a career in order to sustain growth and improvement throughout the industry. The award was presented at the 20th Anniversary Scholarship Awards Program in October and held in conjunction with the American Public Transportation Association Annual Meeting and International Expo. The American Public Transportation Foundation is the charitable affiliate of the American Public Transportation Association. Scott is one of 22 students from across the country selected for the honor. He has a 4.0 grade point average and is pursuing a doctorate in transportation and logistics. Scott's advisor, Dr. Jill Hough, nominated him for the scholarship.

## **Students Honored**



Natalie Easterday

### **NDSU student honored at national transportation meeting**

Natalie (Beck) Easterday was named SURTC's Outstanding Student of the Year by the U.S. Department of Transportation University Transportation Center program. Easterday received the award Jan. 12 during the Transportation Research Board's annual meeting in Washington, DC. The award recognizes Easterday's excellent communications skills and her academic contributions. Easterday graduated from NDSU's master's degree program in emergency management at NDSU and was a graduate student with SURTC. The honor included a trip to the TRB meeting and a \$1,000 award. Each year, the U.S. DOT recognizes an outstanding student from each participating University Transportation Center.



## Transit addressed in weekly seminar series

SURTC staff and students participated in the 2008 spring and fall semester transportation seminar series sponsored by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute. The weekly seminars focused on a variety of topics related to important issues in transportation research, policy and applications as well as other relevant topics. SURTC seminar presenters included the following:

Gary Hegland, training coordinator for SURTC, spoke on “Risk Management in Transit,” where he dealt with the uncertainty of loss in all aspects of a transit organization, as well as the establishment of safety and emergency procedures and various financial, legal, and insurance issues.

Carol Wright, associate director of training and outreach, addressed graduate students and others with a writing and editing presentation, “Write – Edit – Rewrite.”

Associate Research Fellow Del Peterson reported on “Biodiesel Use in Fargo-Moorhead MAT Buses” and the related study SURTC conducted which examined the direct effect on the bus fleet of switching to biodiesel.

David Ripplinger, associate research fellow, discussed “Organizing Transit in Small Urban and Rural Areas.” He presented relevant findings from previous studies on transit in urban areas and the potential implications of a current SURTC study on the organization of transit in small urban and rural communities. He later presented a second seminar on the “Longitudinal Analysis of Changes in the Behavior and Attitudes of College Undergraduates toward Public Transportation: First and Second Wave Findings,” which pointed out that bus ridership on campus by those surveyed increased from 33 percent during their freshman year to 45 percent during their sophomore year.

Dr. Jim Miller, SURTC affiliated faculty member, presented “Understanding the Financial and Operating Impacts of Major Service Changes for Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems.” Dr. Miller discussed the general issues involved in analyzing the impacts both financially and operationally when transit systems examine major service changes, and he provided a straight-forward methodology for considering service alternatives. He gave examples using data from actual transit systems to illustrate the methodology and issues.



Jim Miller, Ph.D.



Al Abeson, Ed.D.

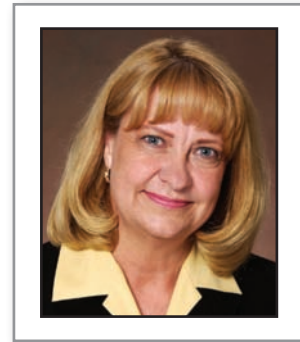
Affiliated faculty member Dr. Alan Abeson presented “The Logic and Nexus – Transportation, Disability, and Federal Policy.” Dr. Abeson was involved in the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the initial version of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). His presentation focused on some of the evolutionary developments in national public policy regarding disability legislation and its translation into access to accessible, affordable, safe and flexible public transportation services.

Jeremy Mattson, associate research fellow discussed the “Effects of Rising Fuel Prices on Transit Ridership.” His presentation dealt with the effects of gas prices on bus ridership by employing a variety of models. The study analyzed ridership for different types of transit systems with an emphasis on bus ridership for small urban and rural transit systems in the Upper Great Plains. Mattson and David Ripplinger also presented a seminar on “How to Conduct a Literature Search.”

Graduate student Marc Scott reported on his “TARC Experience,” reflecting on his internship with the Transit Authority of River City (TARC) in Louisville, KY. In his presentation, Scott gave a discourse on projects he worked on while interning with the planning department of the public transportation system as well as how these efforts pertain to the U.S. public transportation industry in general.

Natalie Easterday, MS student and former SURTC graduate research assistant, presented a seminar focused on community preparedness and planning related to the use of public transportation titled “Evacuation Vulnerability Grading.” She discussed the relationship between vulnerability and public transportation availability. Easterday is a recent graduate of the Emergency Management master’s program at NDSU. She is currently working as a Regional Emergency Planner for Hampton Roads in Virginia.

SURTC is becoming the “go-to” organization for training and outreach for transit agencies in small urban and rural areas. Those agencies often face tight budgets, have limited time, and may be located in areas where more traditional training programs are not available. While SURTC never forgets its roots in the Upper Great Plains and Mountain West, staff members are increasingly fielding questions and requests from across the nation. Staff members work with transit agencies and organizations throughout the United States to address issues and opportunities. These efforts result in new training programs and help identify topics for additional research. Outreach efforts put SURTC staff in direct contact with transit managers, employees, and their operations. As a result, SURTC brings real-world perspective to its work.



Carol Wright

# Training & Outreach

## **SURTC introduces state-of-the-art technology to trainings**

The audience response system, TurningPoint, is a technology now used in SURTC training to allow trainers to ask questions and receive an almost instant response from the entire audience. Instructors use this tool to survey the audience on an activity, check the retention of information and generate discussion during class. Participants remain anonymous, allowing them to feel comfortable answering the questions honestly without fear of embarrassment in case of an incorrect response. TurningPoint works with the Microsoft Office Suite to give real time data that can be used to improve presentations and increase audience involvement. SURTC currently has 42 transponders that it has used for more than a year at trainings all across the country. “Class participants are intrigued and engaged by the technology,” said SURTC Outreach and Training Coordinator Gary Hegland. “They say that the transponders help them stay focused.”



Gary Hegland

# SURTC's National Launch

## SURTC trains across the country

This past year, SURTC trainers have participated in numerous conferences across the nation by teaching a variety of transit related subjects. Gary Hegland and SURTC Associate Director for Outreach and Training Carol Wright traveled to 10 different states to deliver training and were often requested to return multiple times for follow-up engagements. In addition to their transit specific training, general workshop topics included: grant writing; techniques for creating a positive learning environment for adult learners; making a difference (motivational speaking); board of directors training; and customer service. Gary Hegland also conducted multiple passenger service and safety certification (PASS) training sessions in North Dakota and South Dakota.

### Alaska conferences

Gary Hegland and Carol Wright are repeat trainers in Alaska. Gary Hegland first presented there in 2007. Wright and Hegland then taught "Introduction to Transit Management"

to all Alaska transit providers the following November of that year. In October 2008, they were invited back as speakers for the state's fall transit conference, "The Future of Community Transit in Alaska," held in Anchorage. Hegland presented "Performance Evaluation for Small Transit Systems" and participated in a session with Joey Hogan, General Manager of MV Transit in Anchorage, on "Conducting an Accident Investigation." Wright presented "Fundraising and In-Kind Support" with Kelly Shawn, technical assistance specialist with the Community Transportation Association of America. She also presented "Developing and Using Financial Plans for Public Transit Operations." In addition, SURTC participated in a discussion with the Alaska

DOT and transit providers on transit coordination in the state. Alaska Department of Transportation Transit Coordinator Debbi Howard stated, "This is a partnership that the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities, our transit systems, and I truly value. I look forward to many more opportunities to work with SURTC."

### Iowa conferences

Carol Wright was the keynote speaker at both the spring and fall Iowa Public Transportation Association conferences in 2008. Wright presented a full-day seminar on financial management at the spring conference and addressed vehicle and facility maintenance at an all-day conference in the



fall. The larger transit systems invited their maintenance managers to attend the fall session. The conferences were co-sponsored by the Iowa Public Transit Association and the Iowa Department of Transportation.

### Colorado conferences

Carol Wright presented at the spring and fall conferences for the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies and Colorado Department of Transportation (CASTA-CDOT) in 2008. Topics included a half-day presentation on “Safety, Security, and Emergency Management for Rural Transit Operations” and “Finding Coordination Partners and Breaking Down Barriers.” As a result of its experience in working with SURTC, CASTA-CDOT are interested in hosting one or two courses of “Principles of Transit Management” for their transit providers in 2009.



### Risk Management

The training topic that generated the most interest in 2008 was risk management. Variations on that theme were presented eight times in 2008 and have become a special focus of trainer Gary Hegland. He presented workshops on risk management for the Texas Transit Association, the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA) National EXPO in New Orleans, the Wyoming Transit Association (WYTRANS) in Jackson Hole, and in three locations across Minnesota. In addition, Carol Wright and Hegland each presented a session on various aspects of risk management at the Transportation Research Forum in Fort Worth, TX.

### Transit manager training presented in Fargo

SURTC trainers presented an intensive “Introduction to Transit Management” course in Fargo July 28-30. The three-day event was limited to 25 participants and aimed at beginning transit managers. The course provided an overview of transit-related issues and resources. Topics included human resource management, administration, service design and operations, financial management, procurement, vehicle and facility maintenance, safety, security and emergency management, and drug/alcohol program compliance. Instructors included Carol Wright, Gary Hegland, and SURTC Faculty Affiliate Dr. Jim Miller. Miller is retired from Pennsylvania State University and is recognized as one of the nation’s leading experts on small urban and rural transit systems. “We were excited to



# Business Plan Development Training



Jim Miller, Ph.D.



Grant Levi, NDDOT

have Jim assist us with this training, and it was wonderful to have his expertise to draw on,” Wright says. The training was open to transit managers across the country, but most came from SURTC’s primary service area of the Upper Great Plains. Throughout the course, participants used a 600+ page resource manual on transit management prepared by SURTC.

“The manual was designed to be a take-home resource on a large number of management topics that participants can refer to when they are back at home,” Wright says.

## **Business plan development training presented in South Dakota**

Four 5311 transit systems from South Dakota participated in a two-day Business Plan Development Workshop session in Huron, SD, in August 2008. Dr. James Miller, SURTC Faculty Affiliate, led the project and conducted the training along with Gary Hegland, SURTC Training Coordinator. As a result of the workshop, the SD Department of Transportation contracted with SURTC for a follow-up project to have SURTC staff work with each of the systems to write individual business plans for the four agencies.

## **SURTC’s website tallies impressive stats**

In 2008, the SURTC website was visited more than 9,300 times with guests viewing nearly 28,000 pages. Visitors came from 104 different countries and territories, including the United Kingdom, India, Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand. In the United States, visitors from 35 states visited the site with the most traffic to the site coming from North Dakota, California, Minnesota, and South Dakota. “We’ve invested significant resources in our website as a means of outreach,” notes SURTC Director Jill Hough. “The Web helps us facilitate information exchange and is an effective means of sharing our research and expertise. These statistics indicate that we’re achieving those goals.” SURTC’s Web address is [www.surtc.org](http://www.surtc.org).

## **SURTC participates in statewide discussion on mobility and transportation**

The Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, SURTC’s parent organization, hosted a statewide discussion on the mobility needs of North Dakota and the state of its transportation infrastructure in 2008.

Beginning in March, the Institute hosted regional workshops in Williston, Dickinson, Minot, Bismarck, Devils Lake,

Jamestown, Grand Forks, and Fargo. A statewide conference to summarize and tap input from state leaders was held in Mandan May 1. All told, nearly 600 people attended the sessions. A summary of the discussions was presented to the North Dakota Legislature’s Interim Transportation Committee at a meeting in Fargo June 19.

“People expect a lot out of North Dakota’s transportation system,” says Jon Mielke, a UGPTI and SURTC researcher and one of the organizers of the sessions. “Demands on that system, both for personal mobility and for economic activity, are growing. At the same time, costs to maintain and improve the system are escalating, and revenues are not keeping pace.” While escalating costs for personal transportation have driven increased ridership at some of the state’s transit systems, the corresponding revenue has not offset rising costs – especially those for fuel.

Other transportation needs will compete with transit for funding, experts at the meetings noted. Mielke noted that deferring maintenance on the state’s road network is expensive because pavement deterioration is an accelerating process.

Francis Ziegler, director of the North Dakota Department of Transportation, said the state’s highway system is in a preservation mode and that 39 percent of the asphalt roadways are considered mediocre. He noted that demands on the road system are increasing. Manufacturing, energy production, and crop production have all increased substantially in the state with a corresponding need for freight mobility.

Representatives from the city, township, county, and state levels outlined how budgets are being squeezed. Mielke notes that the producer price index increased by 32 percent from 2001 to 2005. Revenue for the state highway system increased by only 18 percent during that time. From 2001 to 2008, the North Dakota Department of Transportation experienced construction cost increases of approximately 60 percent.

Transit operators are in a similar position. “While we can’t have transit systems waiting just in case there will be riders, we do need to look at the future to see what our needs and priorities are,” says Carol Wright. Wright also served as a panelist for the state conference. “Sometimes we have to get squeezed a bit for us to determine exactly what those are. Because of people’s preference for



Francis Ziegler, NDDOT





Pat Hansen



Gene Griffin

mobility independence and their desire to get in a car and go, we haven't built that capacity into our public transit infrastructure. With the increases in fuel prices, people are looking to us to meet their mobility needs, but we can't turn around immediately to address those demands."

Pat Hansen, program director at South Central Adult Services which provides transit for six counties in south central North Dakota, was one of the state's transit managers who spoke up at the statewide conference. Hansen says the meetings performed the important task of providing the same information to transit operators, transportation officials, and state and local decision-makers across the state. "I have a much better idea of what transportation issues are facing the state, and I can see the legislative issues and challenges that we're facing."

"We need to look at the human factors involved with these issues," Hansen said. "Roads and bridges are important, but we're transporting people, sometimes up to 300 miles round trip, for very important medical services," she said. "Mobility is not just about cost, it's about quality of life."

UGPTI Director Gene Griffin told the group that several strategies could be employed to address the situation. "We will need to continue to work smarter and make better use of our scarce resources," he said. "That ability is currently limited by technology, institutional barriers, and collective and individual pride. We can make great strides if we can overcome those barriers or at least push them back. There is a growing recognition among federal, state, and local agencies as well as within the private sector, that maintaining and enhancing our transportation system needs to be a priority."



## Research Reports

Mattson, Jeremy. (2008) **Effects of Rising Gas Prices on Bus Ridership for Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems**. UGPTI Report DP-201, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

Mielke, Jon, Jeremy Mattson, and David Ripplinger. (2008) **Assessing Impacts of Rising Fuel Prices on Rural Native Americans**. UGPTI Report DP-208, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

Peterson, Del, and Jeremy Mattson. (2008) **Biodiesel Use in Fargo-Moorhead MAT Buses**. UGPTI Report DP-200, Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, North Dakota State University, Fargo.

## Journal Articles

Cao, Xinyu and Jill A. Hough. (2008) **Hedonic Value of Transit Accessibility: An Empirical Analysis in a Small Urban Area**. Journal of the Transportation Research Forum, 47 (3), 171-184.

Mattson, Jeremy. (2008) **The Effects of Gasoline Prices on Bus Ridership for Different Types of Transit Systems**. Journal of the Transportation Research Forum, 47 (3), 5-21.

Hough, Jill A, Xinyu Cao, and Susan L. Handy. (2008) **Exploring Travel Behavior of Elderly Women in Rural and Small Urban North Dakota: An Ecological Modeling Approach**. Transportation Research Record: Journal of the Transportation Research Board, No. 2082, National Research Council, Washington, DC, pp. 125-131.

Hough, Jill. (2008) **Relative Desired Mobility of Elderly Women Living in Rural and Small Urban Locations in North Dakota** in Proceedings from "Impact of Changing Demographics on the Transportation System Conference", Keck Center of the National Academies, Transportation Research Board, Washington, D.C.

## Staff Presentations

**Travel Behavior of Aging Women in North Dakota** presented by Jill Hough at the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting in January.

**New Approaches to Paratransit** panel moderated by David Ripplinger at the TRB Annual Meeting in January.

**Defining Small Urban & Rural in the Context of Transit** presented by David Ripplinger at the 49th Transportation Research Forum in Fort Worth, TX, in March.

**Advanced Small Transit Vehicle Technology Study** presented by Del Peterson at the 49th Transportation Research Forum in Fort Worth, TX, in March.

**Risk Management in Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems** presented by Gary Hegland and Carol Wright at the 49th Transportation Research Forum in Fort Worth, TX, March 17.

**Alternative Risk Management** presented by Gary Hegland at the 49th Transportation Research Forum in Fort Worth, TX, in March.

**Rural Public Paratransit and Mobility** presented by Carol Wright at the 49th Transportation Research Forum in Fort Worth, TX, in March.

**The Senate Budget: A Crucial Infrastructure Investment** testimony by Jill Hough before the U.S. Senate Committee on the Budget Hearing on Transportation Infrastructure before Senator Conrad in Minot, ND, in March.

Jill Hough and Jon Mielke spoke at the North Dakota Transit Coordination Summit sponsored by SURTC and AARP North Dakota on April 9, 2008. Carol Wright from SURTC and Linda Wurtz from AARP ND coordinated the conference.

**From the Ground Up – Planning for New Service at South Dakota State University** presented by David Ripplinger at the American Public Transportation Association’s 2008 Transportation and University Communities Conference in Reno, NV, in April.

**State Conference on Transportation Decision Making** organized and moderated by Jon Mielke in Mandan, ND, in May.

**Mobility and Emerging Transportation Needs of Seniors** panel moderated by Jill Hough at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**New Directions in Rural Transit: Student Paper Competition Winners**, panel moderated by Jill Hough at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**Tribal Transit Needs Assessment and Program Planning** by Jon Mielke at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**Strategies for Meeting Safety and Security Challenges in Community Transportation** panel moderated by Gary Hegland at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**NDinfo.org: Building a Regional Transit Travel Information System** by David Ripplinger at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**Hot Topics for New Managers** roundtable facilitated by Gary Hegland and Carol Wright at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**Effects of Rising Gas Prices on Bus Ridership for Small Urban and Rural Transit Systems** by Jeremy Mattson at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**Specialized Medical Transportation in Rural Communities** panel moderated by Carol Wright at the Transportation Research Board 18th National Conference on Rural Public and Intercity Bus Transportation in Omaha, NE, in October.

**Relative Desired Mobility of Elderly Women Living in Rural and Small Urban Locations in North Dakota** presented by Jill Hough at the Transportation Research Board Demographics Conference in Washington in October.

**Impact of Rising fuel Prices on Rural Native Americans** presented by Jon Mielke at the National Tribal Transportation Conference in Oklahoma City, OK, in November.

## Training and Outreach

**A Tool Kit for Grant Writing** presented by Carol Wright at the Dakota Transit Association Mid-Year Conference in Bismarck, ND, in April.

**Risk Management in Transit** presented by Gary Hegland at the 2008 Texas Transit Association Spring Conference in Waco, TX, in April.

**Coordination Implementation** presented by Gary Hegland at the Montana Transit Association Spring Conference in Bozeman, MT, in April.

**Making a Difference** presented by Carol Wright at the Bismarck-Mandan Chapter of the National Management Association in Bismarck, ND, in April.

**Transit Risk Management & Pool Insurance Options** presented by Gary Hegland. The five-hour session were presented three times in Minnesota in April: in Mankato, St. Cloud and Bemidji.

**Risk Management** presented by Gary Hegland at the 2008 Community Transportation Association of America Expo in New Orleans in June.

**Financial Management** was a full-day session presented by Carol Wright at the Iowa Public Transit Conference in Des Moines, IA, in June.

**Introduction to Transit Management**, a three-day course presented by Carol Wright, Gary Hegland and Jim Miller at North Dakota State University in Fargo in July.

**Business Plan Development Workshop**, a 2-day workshop presented by James Miller and Gary Hegland in Huron, SD, in August.

**Techniques for Creating Positive Learning Environment Training** presented by Gary Hegland at the Dakota Transit Association Fall Conference and Bus Roadeo in Watertown, SD, in September.

**Safety, Security and Emergency Management for Rural Transit Operations**, a half-day workshop presented by Carol Wright at the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies—Colorado Department of Transportation 2008 Fall Transit Conference and Expo in Copper Mountain, CO, in September.

**Transit Coordination: Finding Coordination Partners and Breaking Down Barriers**, a two-hour workshop presented by Carol Wright at the Colorado Association of Transit Agencies—Colorado Department of Transportation 2008 Fall Transit Conference and Expo in Copper Mountain, CO, in September.

**Accident Investigation: Transit Style** presented by Gary Hegland at the 2008 Alaska Community Transportation Transit Conference in Anchorage, AK, in October.

**Performance Evaluation for Small Transit Systems** presented by Gary Hegland at the 2008 Alaska Community Transportation Transit Conference in Anchorage, AK, in October.

**Fundraising and In-Kind Support** presented by Carol Wright at the 2008 Alaska Community Transportation Transit Conference in Anchorage, AK, in October.

**Developing and Using Financial Plans for Public Transit Operations** presented by Carol Wright at the 2008 Alaska Community Transportation Transit Conference in Anchorage, AK, in October.

**Risk Management for Transit Operators** presented by Gary Hegland at the Wyoming Fall Transit Conference in Jackson Hole, WY in October.

**Vehicle and Facility Maintenance**, a one-day workshop presented by Carol Wright at the 2008 Fall Iowa Public Transit Association Conference in Coralville, IA in November.

## Professional Involvement

To provide perspective and input on rural and small urban mobility issues and to gain background on challenges facing stakeholders, SURTC staff participate in the following activities:

### NATIONAL

- APTA Blue Ribbon Task Force, Workforce Development – Jill Hough
- Council of University Transportation Centers – Jill Hough
- National Transit Institute (NTI) Advisory Board, Rutgers University – Jill Hough
- Transit Cooperative Research Program Oversight Project Selection (TOPS) Committee, Sponsored by the National Academies of Science – Jill Hough
- Transportation Research Board (TRB) 2008 Rural and Intercity Bus Conference Planning Committee – Jill Hough
- Transportation Research Forum (TRF) 2008 Annual Meeting Planning Committee – Jill Hough
- Transportation Research Forum (TRF) Council – David Ripplinger
- National Bus Safety and Security Program Working Group for FTA – Carol Wright
- AARP National Planning Conference “The Role of Transportation Planning in Creating Livable Communities” – Carol Wright
- CTAA State Delegate for ND – Carol Wright
- National Quality Assurance Committee on Community Transportation Mutual Insurance – Gary Hegland
- National Transit Institute’s Rural ITS Curriculum Committee – David Ripplinger
- Journal of the Transportation Research Forum, Guest Editor – Jill Hough
- Eno Center for Transportation Leadership – Jill Hough
- Transportation Cooperative Research Program (TCRP) Panels:
  - J-11 Committee, Selection of APTA Research Projects – Jill Hough
  - F-12 “Employee Compensation Guidelines for Transit Providers in Rural and Small Urban Areas” – Jill Hough
  - SF-12 “Paratransit Managers’ Skills, Qualifications, and Needs” – Jill Hough
  - B-32 “Understanding How to Motivate Communities to Support and Ride Public Transit” – Carol Wright
  - F-13 “Driver Recruitment, Retention and Performance in ADA Paratransit Operations” – Carol Wright
  - B-35 “A Handbook for Planning and Operating Flexible Public Transportation Services” – Del Peterson
  - J-6 “Assessing the Outcomes of Increased SAFETEA-LU Funding for Rural Passenger Services” – Jill Hough

## **STATE**

- ND Statewide Human Service Steering Committee – Carol Wright
- Steering Committee for Generating Public Involvement in Transportation Policy and Funding Decision Making Processes – Jon Mielke
- ND Association of Counties/AARP North Dakota Future Focus Coalition – Carol Wright
- Council of Government “Green” Conference Planning Committee – Del Peterson
- Governing Summit: Livable Communities – Jill Hough

# Advisory Board



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Transit Section Supervisor  
Montana DOT



Keven Anderson  
District 4 Project Manager  
Minnesota DOT



Ron Baumgart  
Dakota Transit Association  
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ND Disabilities  
Advocacy Consortium



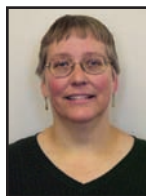
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