

The Update

May 2024

Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby



Drivers Honored at Spring Meeting



Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) administrators, staff, and drivers gathered for a day of professional development and recognition on Saturday, April 20th at the Atlantic Golf & Country Club.

The meeting featured a review of safety practices and procedures to follow in the event of an incident. There were also break-out sessions for focused training on specific routes and services provided. Another group session featured a follow-up report from the Transportation Safety Administration about a bus safety training program.

Another focus for the Spring meeting is driver recognition. SWITA takes pride in providing safe, efficient, and affordable transportation for all, and drivers ultimately make rides happen. Each year SWITA takes time to recognize drivers for exceptional commitment to service. Drivers nominate their colleagues for the awards. SWITA presented five Outstanding Driver Awards, Service Recognition Awards, Rookie of the Year, Kelly Davis Leadership Award, and Driver of the Year.



Driver of the Year Steve Herrington (Middle) accepts his award from Transit Director Mark Lander and Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton.

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This year's Outstanding Driver Awards went to Roger Jensen (Cass), Virgil VanFosson (Montgomery), James Lewis (Shelby), Darrell Newman (Mills), and Lois Heidenescher (Mills). Recently retired driver James Butler attended and was recognized for his 10 years of service. Retired drivers Chris Newman and Terry Musich were also honored for their service to SWITA. Current driver Jon Graham was recognized for 10 years of service.

Driver Awards and Spring Drivers Meeting



2024 Outstanding Drivers (L-R): Transit Scheduler Tracy Clark, Transit Director Mark Lander, Driver Virgil Vanfosson, Driver Darrell Newman, Driver Roger Jensen, Driver Lois Heidenescher, Transit Scheduler Kersten Abild, Transit Scheduler Julie Hays, Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton. (Not Pictured Driver James Lewis.)



Retiring Driver James Butler accepting recognition from Templeton and Lander.



Kelly Davis Award Winner Jon Clemens accepting from Lander and Templeton

Rookie of the Year Peter Menke receives his award from Lander, Templeton, and Clark.

Rookie of the Year was awarded to Peter Menke of Pottawattamie County. Pete has been a great addition to SWITA. He has shown great flexibility and his willingness to learn and cover routes has been appreciated, in addition to a regular route in Council Bluffs/Omaha.

The Kelly Davis Leadership Award was presented to driver Jon Clemens for his dedication to transit services and willingness to train others

along the way. The Kelly Davis Award is given each year in honor of former SWITA Transit Coordinator Kelly Davis, who passed away in 2022. The award is given to an employee who demonstrates a selfless desire to serve their team and community, as Kelly did. Jon is always willing to help cover routes at the last minute and gets great reviews from riders for being “wonderful and amazing.” Jon has a great attitude and has a willingness to train new drivers and learn new routes.

The Driver of the Year Award was given to Steven Herrington from Cass County. Steve goes above and beyond for his riders, always greeting them with a smile and hello. He is willing to pick up extra trips and routes, including nighttime and weekend routes, and assists new drivers with routes and other training issues. His student riders love him, and he always checks in with office staff with a smile. Steve is a great representative of what SWITA is all about.

SWIPCO Honored by ICOG for Harvest Hills Development



SWIPCO Staff Accepting the 2024 ICOG Innovative Project Award at the Staff Retreat in Des Moines (L-R): Barb Boggs, Mary Auten, Tammy DeBord, Aaron Koontz, Erin Hudson, ICOG Chair Nichole Moore.

DES MOINES – Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) has been awarded the 2024 Innovative Project Award from the Iowa Association of Councils of Governments (ICOG) for work with the City of Woodbine on the Harvest Hills Development. The award was accepted at the ICOG Staff Retreat in Des Moines.

SWIPCO worked with the City of Woodbine to apply for and obtain a Community Development Block Grant from disaster recovery funds following the 2019 Missouri River floods to create an affordable housing project.

SWIPCO worked with the city and NuStyle Development to administer funds and help coordinate the project to construct 40 new homes and the supporting infrastructure in the Harvest Hills subdivision located on the west edge of Woodbine.

SWIPCO's Ashley Hayes, Erin Hudson, Aaron Koontz, Mary Auten, and Barb Boggs had hands on the project. The team has filled many roles along the way after helping obtain the initial grant funding. SWIPCO has helped 2019 flood displaced and low to moderate income residents match with the new housing opportunities, assure that federal standards and guidelines are followed, coordinated planning, and assured proper paperwork has been filed.



Disaster Recovery Coordinator Ashley Hayes said, “I’m proud of our team here at SWIPCO and how quickly we all adapt to the ebbs and flows of grant work at this scale. The rapport each one of us has developed with each of the developer’s team members and with the City of Woodbine, as well as IEDA, has been very helpful throughout this project and others as well. We are excited for the city to continue to thrive with this additional housing and infrastructure and it’s great to know there are individuals and developers that are willing to invest in our rural communities. It’s exciting to know that our work as a team has been recognized in this way.”

Atlantic, Essex, and Harlan Receive CDBG Awards

SWIPCO has helped obtain Community Development Block Grant Water and Sewer Awards for the cities of Atlantic, Essex, and Harlan recently.

Harlan obtained an award to conduct CIPP lining of approximately 22,000 linear feet of sewer mains and some spot repairs of mains that are too dilapidated to line. The total project is estimated at \$1,320,000 and the CDBG award was for \$500,000.

The City of Atlantic is set to work on a new clearwell, which is the final storage stage for a municipal drinking water purification system. They are receiving a \$500,000 CDBG for the project. Atlantic also has recently been informed by IEDA that they have been awarded an Iowa Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant in the amount of \$154,033 for a street light project.

The City of Essex has also been awarded a \$500,000 CDBG for a water project. They will be constructing a new water tower to serve their municipal drinking water system.

SWIPCO is excited for these communities to be able to tackle these projects and looks forward to working with other communities in the region to apply for and obtain grant funds.

Pottawattamie County Drivers Pass Latest TSA Test

SWITA has been working with TSA officials for many months now on testing drivers ability to follow safety protocols. In our latest round of testing drivers in Pottawattamie County passed a set of random tests with a 100% success rate.

We will continue to have some random safety testing into the future to encourage drivers to be vigilant with the safety of their vehicles.

We celebrated the achievement of the Pottawattamie County crew with some breakfast pizza and donuts on May 10th. Great work crew!



SWITA by the Numbers

	April 2024	YTD (Since July 1)
Total Miles	183,855	1,589,727
Total Hours	10,347	90,506
Total Rides	50,369	465,153
<u>April Rides by Service</u>		<u>April Rides by Demographic</u>
Workforce Rides	7,481	Disabled 25,875
Taxi Rides	4,782	Elderly 2,973
Student Rides	7,524	Other Gen. Public 21,521
Other	30,582	

New Buses Arrive at Critical Time for SWITA



One of five new 2024 Ford Glaval buses joining the SWITA fleet

Transit agencies across the country have been battling a major shortage of available new buses to replace aging fleets. Southwest Iowa Transit Agency unfortunately knows this need all too well. Record ridership combined with a lack of replacement vehicles has put SWITA at the top of the list for oldest fleets in the state and near the top nationwide. This month has brought some good news to start alleviating this problem with the arrival of five new buses.

SWITA recently took delivery of five 2024 Ford Glaval 18-passenger cutaway buses from Høglund Bus Company. These vehicles

were originally ordered in 2021

but have only now just arrived. A multitude of factors have contributed to this bus shortage and delay nationwide, but the issue was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of bus manufacturers in the country had already started to dwindle with consolidation but the pandemic caused the industry to shrink to two major manufacturers. Supply chain issues combined with reduced capacity further delayed production. Starting from the lack of available chassis to start with all the way up to high demand for competing products like campers. An added layer that has slowed things down is manufacturing requirements for the Build America, Buy America legislation. Stakeholders in the transit industry have been working with legislators and manufacturers to try to break through the logjam.

The pandemic also resulted in record investment in public transit infrastructure, so it's been a bit of a catch-22 to see results. Cost is another factor that has made procurement a big challenge. Back in 2021 these buses would have cost about \$86,000, but continued cost increases and inflation have ballooned that figure all the way up to over \$160,000 per bus today. Cost adjustments require contract changes, further slowing the process. That's why it is a big deal for SWITA to see some new vehicles show up on the lot. Ideally SWITA should take delivery of 10 new vehicles a year to keep up with wear and tear. Until that pace returns SWITA will continue to invest heavily in maintenance of existing buses and purchasing used buses where they make sense.

SWITA is excited to get these new vehicles rolling and will continue to put effort into improving the bus ecosystem.

Southwest Iowa Families Celebrates New Facility



Southwest Iowa Families Inc. staff and partners celebrate their new facility with a ribbon cutting on May 8, 2024

Southwest Iowa Families Inc. celebrated their new space at the Lakin Foundation Child and Family Center in Clarinda on May 8th. The organization hosted an open house and had a ribbon cutting for staff, partners, and the public. The organization provides mental health and other support services in the region.

Construction on the facility began in 2022 and was finished in December of 2023 for the 9,000 square foot space. Approximately \$2.9 million dollars was raised for the project. SWIPCO assisted in securing a \$600,000 Community Development Block Grant for Community Facilities and Services.



New welcome desk at Southwest Iowa Families Inc.



Visitors lined up for desserts at the open house

IPTA DC Fly-In to Support Transit Priorities

SWITA Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton and Communications Coordinator Chris Parks recently joined other members of the Iowa Public Transit Association in Washington D.C. to meet with Federal Transit Administration Officials and Legislative Staff. Meetings were held at FTA offices and the US Capitol to promote transit priorities.



IPTA Members before legislative meetings at the US Capitol



IPTA Members after meeting with FTA officials.

Interested in Being Involved?

SWIPCO currently has vacancies on our housing trust fund and revolving loan fund boards. Contact Executive Director John McCurdy if you have an interest in any vacancy.

Upcoming Grant

Information:

- Land and Water Conservation Fund Program
June 15, 2024
- Iowa Workforce Housing Tax Incentive Program
June 10, 2024
- IDNR Land and Water Conservation Fund
June 15, 2024
- IEDA Enhance Iowa Community Attraction and Tourism (CAT) Grant
June 15, 2024
- USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) Quarterly
June 30, 2024
- USDA Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants
Quarterly June 30, 2024
- IDNR Solid Wastes Alternatives Program
Quarterly June 30, 2024

Birthdays & Anniversaries



Ann Anstey
Grants Specialist II
Birthday Month



Dani Briggs
Lead Planner
Birthday Month and 6 Years of Service



Dee Holtz
Administrative Assistant
Birthday Month

McCurdy Re-elected to the National Association of Development Organizations Board of Directors

Washington, DC, May 22, 2024 – John McCurdy, Executive Director of Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) was recently re-elected to a third term on the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) Board of Directors for 2024-2026. McCurdy represents the Central Region on the 66-member Board.



The NADO Board of Directors oversees the association’s budget and operations and develops policy on issues affecting Regional Development Organizations (RDOs). The organization was founded in 1967 to provide training, information, and representation for RDOs throughout the United States. Today, NADO member organizations serve local governments and the public within their regions through various programs focused on diversifying local economies, assisting businesses, creating jobs, and providing social services.

“We are honored to have John serve on NADO’s Board of Directors. John brings a wealth of expertise, knowledge, and leadership on regional community and economic development issues to the national level,” stated NADO Executive Director Joe McKinney. “Most importantly, John is focused on helping our nation’s local communities pursue comprehensive regional strategies for remaining economically competitive in today’s rapidly changing global environment. You also know where John stands on issues. He speaks his mind, and he advocates strongly for rural America.”

NADO’s Board includes members that represent a broad section of the United States including the Eastern, Central, Midwestern, Southeastern, Southwestern and Western regions. To learn more about NADO’s Board of Directors, visit nado.org/board.

SWIPCO STAFF

John McCurdy, AICP
Executive Director

Mark Lander
Transit Director

Erin Hudson
Community Development Director

Karen Mauer
Administrative Services Director

Rhonda Brown
Finance Manager

Daurine Petersen
Human Resources Coordinator

Kersten Abild
Transit Scheduler II

Ann Anstey
Grants Specialist II

Mary Auten
Grants Specialist I

Michael Ballinger
Safety Coordinator

Barb Boggs
Grants Specialist I

Dani Briggs
Lead Planner

Tracy Clark
Transit Scheduler III

Tammy DeBord
Grants Specialist III

Mark Hansen
Fleet Mechanic

Sandy Hansen
Grants Specialist III

Ashley Hayes
Disaster Recovery Coordinator

Julie Hays
Transit Scheduler I

Dee Holtz
Administrative Assistant

Holly Jackson
Planner I

Matthew Lee
Building Inspector II

Brandie McFarland
Human Resources Specialist

Chris Parks
Communications Coordinator

Nicole Rhodes
Grants Specialist II

Phil Richter
Building Inspector I

Kristen Templeton
Transit Coordinator

Michael Wolff
Transit Scheduler I

Teresa Wright
Finance Specialist