



*Operating Above the Standard*

## Public Transportation News



# The Wheel

July/Aug/Sept 2019

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*The Wheel is published quarterly & mailed free of charge to every active OATS Transit rider, legislators, current funding sources & other interested people in the 87 county service area. It is mailed third class bulk postage paid at Columbia. If your name is misspelled or address has changed, please call your local OATS Transit office or email the Wheel editor.*

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OATS, Inc. (dba OATS Transit) is a private, not-for-profit transportation provider serving 87 Missouri counties. Transportation is available to the general public in rural areas. In urban areas (Columbia, St. Louis, St. Joseph, Springfield, Kansas City) service is limited & not available to the general public. Contact your local OATS Transit office for service available to you, or to enter into an agreement to pay for services. Individuals and agencies may contract with OATS Transit for transportation.

OATS Transit operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. We are an equal opportunity employer M/F/H/V.

**Relay Missouri** is available to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind, and/or speech impaired. Use the Relay Missouri service by calling 711 to talk with an OATS representative or to schedule your trip.

#### **OATS Transit Board of Directors**

**President: Mel Sundermeyer**  
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*Board Meetings are held at the Home Office in Columbia and are open to the public. Contact the Home Office for meeting dates.*

**Bus Schedules and fare information can be found at:**  
**[www.oatstransit.org/schedules](http://www.oatstransit.org/schedules)**

**Development Office: 888-875-6287**

**Follow us on social media:**  
**@oatstransit**



## Our Bus Match Needs

*Your knowledge and connections are important in our continued success!*

OATS Transit receives capital grants that cover a portion of the money needed to purchase new buses and vans. What many do not know is that we have a requirement to raise local funds (called local bus match) before we can buy new buses. The grants do not cover 100 percent of the purchase. Each bus we buy means we have to raise at least \$10,000 or more locally.

Since the start of our company in the early 70's, volunteers have always played an active role to raise money for buses that you- our riders- rely upon. As our fleet grows, our volunteers cannot keep up with the demand. Fundraising becomes more challenging so we have to look at other resources to get the local match needed. That is where you come in!

Everyone has local connections- whether it be local businesses you frequent, businesses that you/family/friends work at, or other resources we can tap into. Do you know of companies or individuals in your community our staff can reach out to? Do you have family or friends who work in businesses that support non-profit charities? Do you know of individuals who would be willing to support OATS Transit? If so, please call our Development Staff at the Columbia office at 888-875-6287, email Jill at [jstedem@oatstransit.org](mailto:jstedem@oatstransit.org), or send a note to: 2501 Maguire Blvd, Suite 101, Columbia, MO 65201. Write down the names and contact info, and we will do the rest.

Remember, OATS Transit is a 501c3 organization, so donations may be tax deductible. You can also donate securely online by clicking on the donor page on our website: [www.oatstransit.org](http://www.oatstransit.org).

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***Pictured:*** New OATS Transit buses in a line-up outside of the Home Office in Columbia, MO. (photo by: David J.)

# Improving Operational Efficiencies

We are happy to share OATS Transit's progress of our new Ecolane scheduling and dispatching software with you since the Spring Wheel edition. Three of our eight offices around the state are now using the new software, with plans to roll out to the rest throughout the summer, and finish by fall.

One immediate benefit from the new all-electronic scheduling/dispatching system that we were not able to see previously, is our on-time performance rate. For hospitals and doctors who expect their patients to arrive on time, this is very important. It's also important for you, our riders, who depend on timely service. We can now say with confidence that our on-time percentage rate in St. Louis and Charles Counties (our East Region) is 94%, which speaks volumes when you consider the amount of trips and the fact that it is all urban with lots of traffic. People need to know they can count on OATS Transit to be there in a timely fashion!



The new software is designed to manage trips in the most efficient and economical way, saving you time on the bus and saving us money on fuel, driver hours and other operating costs. One thing that will not change throughout this whole process is our friendly, helpful drivers who are there to make your travel experience the best possible! Our drivers are our greatest asset and the face of our company in your community.

Coming in 2020, we will see some additional features added such as an app that will help riders see where their bus is and when it will arrive. It is our goal to continue communicating progress on Ecolane so that you stay up to date on any upcoming changes. We hope to offer more efficient service, and thus ultimately increase the amount of service and trips we are able to offer our customers.



**Pictured:** Top; Ecolane trainer Charles, works with East Region Dispatchers Latisha and Shonda to teach them about the new software. Bottom; Several riders enjoy a day trip to Lead Mine grocery store and other shops in the area. (photo by: Brittany B.)

## Help Wanted

### Volunteers to Serve as Rider Companions

This unique position is an excellent opportunity for those who have been serving as local contacts and wish to stay involved to ensure the OATS Transit buses are full and your fellow riders are aware of how to schedule a trip.

- Help fellow riders schedule trips in advance.
- Call local riders routinely to remind them how the advanced scheduling works.
- Serve as a local advocate in your community to ensure everyone knows how to schedule a ride.

If you would like to volunteer as a rider companion, call Brittany at the Home Office at 888-875-6287 and we will mail or email you a volunteer application. We are able to use volunteer hours toward our in-kind operating support so your hours of service do matter. Thank you to all our local volunteers for your continued support.





# REMOVING BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE

For many Missourians, getting to hospitals, clinics and other medical facilities isn't as easy of a task as it sounds.

Transportation is often cited as a barrier to proper health care, leading to missed medical appointments and poor illness management.

**More than 30% of Missouri's 6 million population live in rural areas with limited access to health care and other necessities.**

Without reliable transportation, getting to medical appointments consistently can be a challenge. Nationwide, about 3.6 million patients miss medical appointments because they lack transportation.

OATS Transit, one of Missouri's leading non-emergency medical transportation providers, strives to be part of the solution to remove such barriers that lead to prolonged health risks. "The key to any successful transportation program is frequency, safety and reliability," said Dorothy Yeager, OATS Transit Executive Director. "Our company partners with many healthcare facilities statewide, both urban and rural, to meet the needs of their patients."

For many years, OATS Transit has collaborated with Mercy Hospital in St. Louis to get patients to the Head Injury Resource Center. These patients have suffered from a stroke, accident or other traumatic brain injury and are in need of occupational, physical and speech therapies. The therapies help patients enhance their quality of life, and regain their health. Once the Hospital determines who is eligible for transportation, they arrange with OATS Transit to provide the service. There are more than 50 patients at any given time utilizing our services to get to three St. Louis head injury clinics operated by Mercy Hospital. "The ability to have transportation taken care of by OATS Transit has been a huge relief to our patients," said Trisha Nance, Supervisor of Therapy Services at Mercy Hospital St. Louis. "It takes the burden off the patient and their families knowing they can get to their appointments."

In 1988, Congressman Pete Stark introduced legislation to prohibit physician "self-referral."



This severely impacted many low income and elderly clients who relied upon hospitals, clinics and kidney foundations to assist in paying for their transportation for necessary services. In 2017, federal statutes under the Safe Harbor Act brought about changes affecting hospitals and clinics, allowing them to provide free or reduced cost transportation to established patients within 25 miles of the health care facility which the individual is being transported, or within 50 miles if the individual resides in a rural area. Contracting for service with providers like OATS Transit helps hospitals comply with these regulations while providing a superior level of service for their clients.

In rural areas, OATS Transit partners with hospitals such as Nevada Regional Medical Center, Fitzgibbon Hospital, Golden Valley Memorial Hospital and Bates County Memorial Hospital to assure patients get to and from their facilities. The hospitals have pre-approved locations that patients go to, and then it is up to the individual to call OATS Transit to schedule their ride. This means less time for hospital staff coordinating and scheduling transportation so they can spend more time caring for their patients. For us, it means more efficient routing of buses and less unproductive wait time for our drivers. With reliable, consistent transportation, there are less hospital re-admits and better overall health.

According to Tracy Walkup, OATS Transit Midwest Regional Director, there is an overall cost savings of about 25-30% for both the hospitals and our company with our staff taking over the scheduling and routing trips.

*"When hospitals contract with OATS Transit, the riders have free or reduced cost transportation to their appointments," Walkup said. "They also miss fewer scheduled appointments; making their health outcomes more positive so it's a win-win for all."*



OATS Transit may be able to help your healthcare facility save time, resources, and money, while giving patients peace of mind that their transportation issues have been resolved. Give us a call at 888-875-6287 to find out more.

**Pictured:** Cover; OATS Transit driver Donna Chism leaving Nevada Regional Medical Center after dropping a rider off for an appointment. (photo by: Brian W.) Left; OATS Transit bus in front of Cass Regional Medical Center. (photo by: John R.) Top; Donald M. uses OATS Transit to get to and from his life-saving dialysis treatments. (photo by: Brittany B.) Bottom; OATS Transit driver Linda Wheeler assists rider Alice P. into the van after a medical appointment. (photo by: Brian W.)





## Thank You Cuivre River Electric Community Trust

OATS Transit received a grant from Cuivre River Electric Community Trust totaling \$2,400. In an effort to ensure residents are provided reliable transportation to allow them to live independently in their own communities, Cuivre River Electric Community Trust presented OATS Transit with the check from its Operation Round Up program. Northeast region driver, Bob Foust, and Lincoln County Sheltered Workshop riders were presented the check (pictured above).

"OATS Transit does a great job of fulfilling the transportation needs in our communities," said Tim Schmidt, Communications/Media Specialist for Cuivre River Electric. "We are proud that Operation Round Up is available for organizations like OATS Transit to help them fulfill their mission to provide transportation in the communities we serve."

The funds will be used toward the purchase of buses for Lincoln and Pike counties in Missouri.

"We are grateful that organizations like the Cuivre River Electric Community Trust are dedicated to giving back to the communities they serve," said Dorothy Yeager, Executive Director of OATS Transit.

## Your Shopping Can Make a Difference

When you shop through Amazon Smile and select OATS, Inc. as your charity, we receive a donation from each order. Start shopping and supporting OATS Transit by visiting [smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com) today!



## HOW TO BEAT THE HEAT

Summer is here which means you need to prepare for the heat when on the bus for extended periods of time. These tips can help keep you cool and comfortable during your commute.

### 1 STAY HYDRATED



Drink lots of ice water! Fill a bottle with water the evening before you get on your bus, and put it in the freezer. Take it with you on your commute, and the ice will melt along the way, providing cool, refreshing water.

### 2 PROTECT YOUR SKIN



Choose a sunscreen that has an SPF of 30 or higher, and apply it before going outdoors. You can keep your sunscreen in the fridge, that way when you put it on, your skin will cool down.

### 3 DRESS WEATHER APPROPRIATE



Wear light colors. Stay clear of black and navy colored clothes which tend to attract heat. Wear loose fitting shirts that won't stick to your skin if you sweat. Accessorize with hats and sunglasses to protect your head and your eyes.

Info provided in part by Citiliner.

## Honoring Our Dialysis Riders

On Saturday, April 27th, several OATS Transit employees and family members participated in the annual Kidney Walk hosted by the National Kidney Foundation at Stephens Lake Park in Columbia, MO. The National Kidney Foundation is the leading organization in the U.S. dedicated to the awareness, prevention and treatment of kidney disease for hundreds of thousands of health-care professionals, millions of patients and their families, and tens of millions of Americans at risk.

OATS Transit was proud to honor our dialysis riders through this walk!





## Thank You to Our Dedicated Phone Contacts

For 48+ years, OATS Transit has had local residents and drivers dedicate hundreds of hours answering phones and taking reservations for trips. We will forever be grateful to all of the individuals who took the time to ensure local residents had a ride and our buses were full. I wish there was a way we could thank every one of you individually! You took time to answer calls and questions from riders and correspond with your driver to ensure everyone's needs were met. As we move forward with our new dispatching and scheduling system, the needs of our volunteer program are changing too. While we won't be using local contacts to receive calls for rides, we hope that many of you will continue, in some capacity, to ensure your local community members know about OATS Transit and how to schedule a ride.



We are humbled by your dedication and believing in our mission. Please know we still need your help, just in a different way. The efforts of volunteers like you are a vital part of our agency. Thank you for your time and commitment to our agency. At the time of this writing, we are updating our phone system to make it easier for everyone to call us without a long directory- you will reach a live person in your local office! You will be notified of changes when ecolane arrives in your region.

***Pictured:** OATS Transit driver Driver Jack Stumbaugh at a Pike County Committee meeting. Many of the members have served as volunteer contacts for several years.*



## OATS TRANSIT

IS PARTICIPATING IN THE 2019  
CHIEFS TICKET FUNDRAISER!



VISIT [WWW.CHIEFS.COM/TICKETS/TICKETFUNDRAISER](http://WWW.CHIEFS.COM/TICKETS/TICKETFUNDRAISER)  
AND USE PROMO CODE OATSTRANSIT TO BUY TICKETS

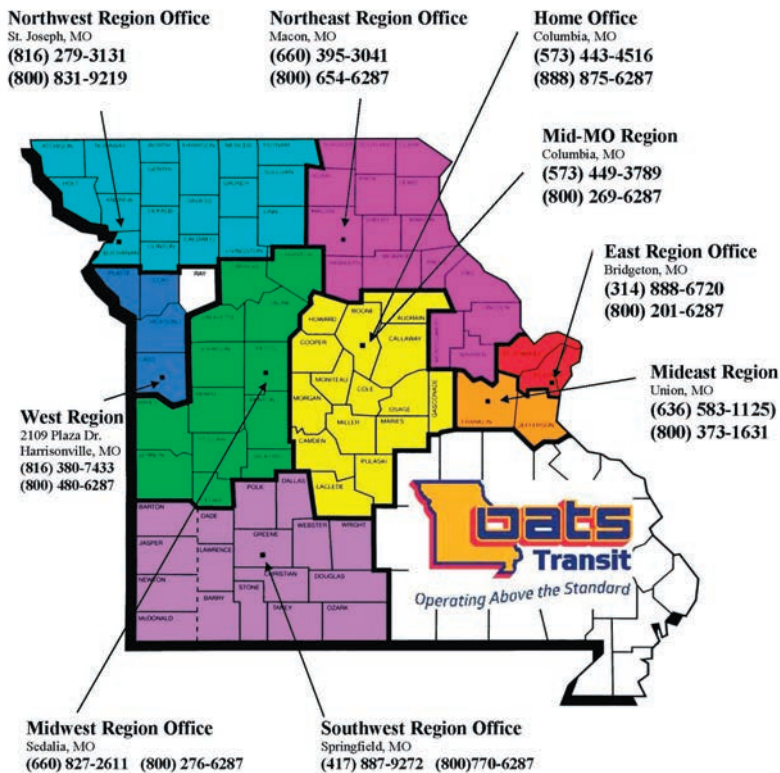
\$10 OF EVERY TICKET PURCHASED WILL HELP US  
**TRANSPORT MORE RIDERS!**

FOR MORE INFO, CALL BRITTANY AT THE  
HOME OFFICE 888-875-6287

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## OATS Transit Service Area



## Employee Anniversaries

*The following employees celebrated an anniversary April-June 2019. Thank you to each employee for your hard work and dedication to OATS Transit!*

### 20 years:

Gene Craft-Cass County Driver

### 15 years:

Chester Jones-St. Louis County Driver  
Lisa Moore-Shelby County Driver  
Brenda Higdon-Marion County Driver  
Yolanda Tomlin-Taylor-St. Louis County Driver

### 10 years:

Dean Kiesling-Moniteau County Driver  
Bill Cannell-Callaway County Driver  
Teri Jones-NW Region Operations Manager

## Congratulations!

Holiday Reminder: OATS Transit will be closed and most regular routes will not be running on Thursday, July 4th for Independence Day and Monday, September 2nd for Labor Day.