The Wheel is published quarterly & mailed free of charge to active OATS Transit riders, 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 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  
Vice President: Krissy Sinor  
Secretary/Treasurer: Scott Kosky

Members: Edna Foster, John Griesheimer, Darleen Rapp, Dottie Littlejohn, Patricia Mefford, Rachel Baskersville, Rex Scott and Julie Rodgers.

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 & fare information can be found at:  
www.oatstransit.org/schedules

Development Office: 888-875-6287

Follow us on social media:  
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Last year we had hundreds of volunteers who performed 134,631 hours of service for our company. That number includes county committees, bus aides and helpers who help people ride the bus. Those hours are equivalent to $1,422,725 of in-kind service. We have 430 volunteers who serve on county committees in 36 counties.

Pictured: Top left-Lincoln county volunteers after a trip to the Butterfly House in Chesterfield, MO. Top right-Board members Patricia Mefford and Darleen Rapp at a recent board meeting. Middle-Newton county volunteers hold a fundraiser to raise money for local bus match. Bottom left-Clark county volunteers Joe Booth, Billie Hatfield, Sue Harvey, Mary Nichols, Louise Wood and Peggy Thorn.
As a nonprofit organization we understand how valuable volunteers are. OATS Transit is proud to have hundreds of people who are dedicated to ensuring our company is known throughout the state of Missouri and beyond.

Volunteers help with a variety of tasks including legislative outreach at the local and state level, showing others how to ride the bus, fulfilling the role of an aide for an individual on the bus, serving on county committees or the state Board of Directors, and searching for local resources for bus match funding. Volunteers are a strong part of our history, and help us carry out our mission to provide safe, caring and reliable transportation.

These individuals truly play a critical role in the success of our company. We salute our team of volunteers, not just in April as we celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Month, but every day. We are beyond blessed!

As we gear up for our 50th anniversary, we would love to have you submit your stories, photos, poems, or memories about your connection to OATS Transit. These items will be shared in our 50th anniversary publication in 2021. Help us reach our goal to include something from all 87 counties that we serve! If you would like the items returned to you, please let us know so we can make sure to send them back.

You can send those items by one of the following methods:

- Mail to OATS Transit Home Office (2501 Maguire Blvd, Columbia MO 65201)
- Email to Brittany at bbussey@oatstransit.org
- Deliver to your driver and ask that they give it to their supervisor to ensure it reaches the Home Office

Our 50th anniversary celebration will be held in September 2021 with details to be sent out early next year.

Operating Above the Standard

While waiting for OATS Transit to pick her up, St. Louis county rider, Bridget, had to call 911. Maurice, her dad, had fallen and she needed help getting him up. He refused medical treatment so the paramedics got him inside his house, then left.

OATS Transit driver Joe Wilson showed up to pick up Bridget during the incident. While there, Joe checked on her dad then took Bridget on to her Workshop. Joe was concerned that Maurice was left at home alone after a fall, so he called the Workshop to get a next of kin phone number. He was able to reach Maurice’s son and explained to him what happened and expressed his concern. Maurice’s son went to check on him and found him almost unconscious. He got him to the hospital where he stayed for several days. When he got out, Maurice called OATS to tell us that Joe Wilson saved his life.

Joe was concerned and took the initiate to follow up with his family. Had he not done that, Maurice’s outcome would have been different. Joe went above and beyond the call of duty. He’s not just a driver, he’s a life saver! Maurice is still not back to normal, but he wanted us to know that we have some wonderful drivers. We are very thankful to have many hard-working and caring drivers, like Joe!
Change is hard. In fact, it’s one of the hardest things to go through in life. Humans are creatures of habit and routine so adjusting to changes can be difficult. For our company to grow and succeed, we had to seek improvements to our service delivery model. This is exactly what our new scheduling software, Ecolane, has offered. We understand this change has been harder on some than others, but we are all making the adjustments together!

Looking at the bigger picture, in just one day in March, we performed 4,010 trips with a 90% or higher performance rate. For us, it speaks volumes to our efficient service. The words echoed in our mission and our culture “safe, caring & reliable” remain the top priorities to our riders, staff and contracting agencies. These numbers only include 53 of the 87 counties using the software; we still have 34 more counties remaining to go live on the new system. As we head into spring, 75% of our service area is running on the new scheduling and dispatching software. The remaining 25% will be on the new system before mid-May.

Speaking of performance rates, on that same day, we had 285 no-shows. No-shows are when a driver goes to pick up a rider, but the rider didn’t call to tell us they weren’t riding, so it was an unnecessary trip. This can be avoided by calling our office ahead of time to cancel the trip. This becomes costly to our company, and in the long-run, means we can perform less service. Keep in mind that OATS Transit is a shared-ride transportation system, not a taxi. Please be kind to your fellow riders by simply calling the office to let us know if you have a change of plans. We want to be able to offer more travel options for you, but we cannot do that without your help!

Jim Stec, Vice-President Business Development at Ecolane, welcomed OATS Transit to the Ecolane family with confidence that performance results would speak for themselves. He said that we will be able to accommodate more riders without adding additional expenses. “It is going to be a win-win for all involved,” Stec said. “Ecolane is proud to partner with OATS Transit and to have a partner that is willing to make the necessary, difficult operational changes that will enhance its customer service, not just for today but for the future of its riders.”

Other than calling a your local region office phone number to schedule, the only other aspect that may be different for some is how to pay. You can find out more information about your payment options on the next page.

It has been a yearlong process to phase in all of our service area in Missouri and it has been a long journey. As we move forward to ensure we grow in a more efficient manner, we thank all of you for adjusting to the changes along with us. We are nearing 50 years in business, and the best is yet to come. Thank you for coming along for the ride!

Pictured: Top-Renae Houston, Northeast Operations Coordinator, takes a call to schedule a trip for a rider. Bottom-Jim Stec working with Patty Dodson, Mid-MO Operations Coordinator, during the launch of the new software.
PAYING BUS FARES JUST GOT EASIER!

**CASH**
Pay with cash each time you board the bus. You will need to pay each time, and not all up front, as it may be a different driver/bus each leg of the trip. Drivers don’t carry change.

**CREDIT/DEBIT CARDS**
You can make payments by credit or debit card as often as you’d like by calling the OATS Transit Home Office at 573-443-4516. A minimum of $10.00 must be paid before your scheduled trip. The amount will be entered into your account and applied each time you ride when a fare is required. *We do not accept American Express cards.*

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Crystal Smith is the Marketing Director at Loch Haven, a senior living community in Macon, Missouri that utilizes our services. Smith thinks that transportation is an issue for many nursing homes and assisted living facilities. “We know that there are several facilities that don’t have the resources like we do,” Smith said. “We feel blessed to have OATS Transit in our community.”

Like OATS Transit, Loch Haven is also a nonprofit organization. That leaves them with little to no money for purchasing their own buses or vans. Having reliable transportation is a necessity for their facility. Smith finds working with OATS to be an easy and affordable option. “We appreciate how kind the drivers are,” Smith said. “They are always on time and very courteous to our residents and staff.”

Outside of these facilities, reliable transportation is vital to keep many seniors independent and able to live in their homes. OATS Transit provides service to many seniors who live on their own. Having access to food or healthcare would prove a difficult task to many without our services.

Lynn Goett, a Randolph county rider, credits being able to live on her own because she has OATS Transit. She says the drivers are especially helpful to her. “Thanks to the services that OATS provides, I’m able to continue shopping for food, picking up medicine and tending to my bills,” Goett said. “Without the OATS Transit bus, I would lose my independence and have to move into assisted living.”

OATS Transit has a long history of providing service for senior citizens, and though we serve people of all ages today, senior service is still a very important part of the transportation that we provide.

The company was incorporated in 1971 by a group of volunteers who saw a need for transportation for senior citizens in Missouri. At the time, the company was much smaller and served just eight Missouri counties. We quickly grew, and by 1973 OATS was servicing over 80 counties throughout the state.

In the early 1980’s we were given federal grants that allowed our service to expand to serve the general public instead of only senior citizens. Over the nearly 50 years of OATS’ existence, we have come a very long way from just senior transportation.

Today, we transport people of all ages, for all different purposes. What was once “Older Adult’s Transportation Services” has transformed into OATS Transit, with the meaning of OATS shifting to “Operating Above the Standard” to encompass inclusion of all ages.

Senior transportation is still very much an essential part of our operation today. Our services are utilized by many senior centers, nursing homes and assisted living communities. In addition to receiving funding from five Area Agencies on Aging, OATS Transit contracts with numerous facilities all over the state who use our services regularly for their residents. We transport residents from these facilities for numerous business needs and for medical appointments.
Missouri Foundations Provide Support

We are grateful to be the recipient of grants given by Missouri foundations over the past few months for local bus match to help purchase new vehicles.

- **Community Foundation of the Ozarks Aurora Area Affiliate Program** - $10,000 for Lawrence County
- **Community Foundation of the Ozarks Douglas County Affiliate Program** - $2,000 for Douglas County
- **El Dorado Springs Community Foundation** - $1,000 for Cedar County

To find out how you can support public transportation in your local community, call the OATS Transit Development staff at 573-443-4516, or send an email to Jill at jstedem@oatstransit.org.

Your support is important so we can continue being there for individuals who need rides to medical appointments, work and so much more!

**Julie Rodgers Joins Board of Directors**

One new member has recently been appointed to the OATS Transit Board of Directors. Julie Rodgers of Silex, MO is the newest Board member. She was sworn into office at the regular board meeting on January 28, 2020 in Columbia.

“Julie has been an avid supporter of transportation in Lincoln County and will bring a fresh perspective to the board,” said Dorothy Yeager, OATS Transit Executive Director.

Julie serves as the Executive Director of Lincoln County Economic Development, housed in Troy, MO. She has been with the Economic Development Council for seven years. In 2018 she completed her course study in the Certified Economic Developer program, an international credential. She worked her way up from Assistant Director & Interim Director to being appointed as Executive Director in January 2020.

Julie has served on several local non-profit boards, including the Salvation Army, school board, food pantry and others. She has been instrumental in supporting public transportation in the community due to its importance on economic development.

**Pictured:** OATS Transit Vice-President Krissy Sinor swearing in Julie Rodgers to the Board of Directors.
Employee Anniversaries

The employees listed below celebrated an anniversary January-March 2020. Thank you to each of these employees for your hard work and dedication to OATS Transit!

25 years:
Terry Heilman-Saline county driver
Shirley Ensor-Monroe county driver
Roxana Heidbrier-Lincoln county driver

20 years:
Brian Smock Sr.-Jefferson county driver

15 years:
Cindy Richardson-Jefferson county driver
Tracy Walkup-Midwest Regional Director

10 years:
Mitzi Steele-East Operations Coordinator
Bobby Verga-Mid-MO Maintenance Coord.
Steve Moore-Cooper county driver

Congratulations!