



*Operating Above the Standard*

## Public Transportation News



### Featured

*OATS Transit is helping make the transition from workshops to community employment possible. See story on Competitive Employment.*

# The Wheel

*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.*

**Brittany Dulin, Editor**

**Phone: 573-443-4516 or 888-875-6287**

**Email: [bdulin@oatstransit.org](mailto:bdulin@oatstransit.org)**

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.

Information on volunteer committees can be found on our website at [www.oatstransit.org/schedules](http://www.oatstransit.org/schedules) for counties that have active committees.

**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: Donna Turnbough**

**Members: Edna Foster, John Griesheimer, Darleen Rapp, Dottie Littlejohn, Patricia Mefford, Elle Wasson Duggan and Rachel Baskerville**

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

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

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



## A Note From the Director

2018 was a year of change – we updated the OATS Transit logo, added a new tagline, revised our mission-vision-values statements; and redesigned the website. We're not stopping there! With the new year, we're saying "so-long" to the newsprint version of The Wheel and making way for a new, more dynamic publication filled with meaningful content about OATS Transit and the impact of transit in your community.



The Wheel has been the cornerstone of OATS Transit marketing and outreach efforts from the very beginning, with the first issue coming out in July 1973 as a 2-page document printed in the office. A year later, in 1974, we went to the multi-page newspaper style. After 44 years, we felt it was time for a change. Our bus schedules can now be found on [www.oatstransit.org/schedules](http://www.oatstransit.org/schedules), by contacting your local OATS Transit office or from your OATS Transit driver. We hope you'll find this new format more enjoyable to read. *"Remember – you are the Wheels. Ride with pride and go with OATS."* (From the first issue of The Wheel 1973)

**Happy New Year,**

**Dorothy Yeager, Executive Director**

## McNeill Retires from Board of Directors After 33 years

In December, Nolan McNeill of Cassville, MO retired from the OATS Transit Board of Directors after serving more than 33 years. "Nolan has been an instrumental part of the Board of Directors for more than three decades," said Dorothy Yeager, Executive Director. McNeill was elected to the Board in 1985. In 1993, he was elected President, which was a role he held for many years until his retirement in 2018. "Our company has seen a lot of growth during his tenure on the Board and we are certainly going to miss him," Yeager said.

McNeill said that serving on the Board of Directors has been one of the highlights of his life. He noted all of the changes with the company in his years served; the growth of assets being one. "It has been my pleasure being a part of this success story," McNeill said. "I am so proud of all we have accomplished in the past three decades, and I have no doubt the board will continue these successes in the future."



*McNeill accepting an award from the American Legion on behalf of OATS Transit.*

McNeill is one of twelve individuals who volunteer their time to serve on the statewide Board of Directors. The Board will host a reception for him in March.

## Employee Anniversaries

The following employees celebrated an anniversary Oct-Dec 2018. Thank you to each employee for your hard work and dedication to OATS Transit!

### 35 years:

Barbara Bergthold-Northeast Region Driver

### 20 years:

Karen Botts-Northwest Region Operations Coordinator

### 15 years:

Norris Polley-Northwest Region Driver

Ron Kanatzar-Northeast Region Driver

### 10 years:

Randy Beem-Mid-MO Region Driver

Phil Leatherman-Northeast Region Driver

Rod McBreaity-Mid-MO Region Driver

Roy Miller-Northeast Region Driver

Sue Swanigan-Southwest Region Driver



## Board of Directors Elect Officers for 2019

Congratulations to our newly elected officers for 2019! Pictured left to right: President Mel Sundermeyer of Holt Summit; Vice-President Krissy Sinor of Walnut Grove; and Secretary/Treasurer Donna Turnbough of Paris. They will begin their new roles in January 2019.

## New Legislators Bring Advocacy Needs

With fall elections over, there are several new faces headed to Jefferson City and Washington DC in 2019. In the local elections alone, there are more than 50 new Representatives headed to the state Capitol to represent you. For OATS Transit, that means more outreach and education about the services we provide. Each year the legislature keeps chipping away at state transportation funding, which means a cut to public transportation. Many don't think of OATS Transit as being public transportation, but we are, and these cuts affect the services we are able to provide you. That's where you can help!

Your voice in your community is very important. We rely on our riders and volunteers for advocacy and outreach efforts. Your State Representatives and Senators need to know why OATS Transit is important and what their funding support for public transit means to you. Here are some actions you can take:

- Write letters, emails or call your local Representative(s).
- Ask your driver or our office staff for an "OATS Transit is important to me because...." postcard that you can use to write your legislator.
- Visit your Representative when they are in your community.
- If you have a county volunteer committee, invite them to a meeting.
- If you are having a local fundraiser for bus match, invite them to attend.
- Invite them to stop by a local OATS Transit office or visit the home office in Columbia.
- Invite them to ride the bus with you.



*Pictured: Donna Coleman, a West Region rider.*

If you don't know who your local Representatives are, ask us and we can provide you with contact information. It's important that all legislators understand how important local transportation like OATS Transit is to help you and your neighbors get to the doctor, work, the grocery store and remain independent.



## Competitive Employment Is Becoming First Choice

by: Jill Stedem

Extended Employment Sheltered Workshops began in Missouri in the early 1960's. A national movement called Employment First is underway to help people integrate from workshops into community employment. This framework for change is based on the premise that all citizens, including people with disabilities, should have opportunities for full participation in competitive integrated employment and community life.

OATS Transit is seeing rapid growth for the need of community employment transportation, extended operating hours and more buses to accommodate the influx of riders. We are embracing the change to ensure thousands of Missourians with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) get to work - whether they choose a workshop, or want to explore competitive employment.

OATS Transit has been providing transportation to work since the early 1980's. In fact, it has been our most requested service for many years. In 2001, 25% of the trips we provided were for work transportation. Today, more than 45% of the trips we provide are for work transportation. Our vehicles are now driving five million more miles as people shift from workshops to community employment. "As an organization, we have always maintained a dedication to practices that ensure the integrity of our company and reflect on our mission statement - 'Enhancing quality of life by providing safe, caring & reliable transportation services,'" said Dorothy Yeager, OATS Executive Director. "We want to ensure everyone has access to their community and I'm glad we are able to partner with many agencies to make sure this happens."

To make the transition from workshop to community employment possible, OATS Transit is working with several Senate Bill 40 agencies in the state. According to Ed Thomas, Camden County SB40 Executive Director, approximately 70% of their agency's working-age clients do not drive or

have personal transportation. "When our agency surveyed sheltered workshop employees, we discovered approximately 60% of the employees were interested in seeking competitive integrated employment," Thomas said.

In 2016, OATS Transit began working with Thomas' agency to enhance the public transit system. "As a result of this collaboration, approximately 20% of our agency's working-age clients now have jobs in the community, and this number will continue to grow," Thomas said. "Without OATS Transit, this could not have been possible."

In 2017, public transit expanded to include deviated routes running through Camdenton, Osage Beach, Lake Ozark, Eldon, Laurie, Versailles, Sunrise Beach and other communities in 3 counties. These new systems run Monday through Friday, with one route having extended service to include evenings and weekends.

Senate Bill 40 agencies, overseen by a county-appointed Board of Directors, have been in Missouri since the early 1970's. There are currently 87 Missouri counties that have SB40 tax levies. SB40 provides funding support by enabling local counties to create tax levies for housing, work, day programs and other needs for the (I/DD) community.

The Christian County Links Board identified that transportation was the main barrier to competitive employment for many of the individuals they serve. "The board had a 10-year goal to acquire transportation opportunities in Christian county, and after one meeting with Jeff Robinson, OATS Transit Regional Manager, that goal became a reality," said Andrea Swope, Executive Director of Christian County SB40. "CC Links has enjoyed working with OATS Transit to meet the transportation needs of our community."

In less than two years, the partnership has allowed over 80 individuals to meet their employment goals in the community. "By breaking down the barriers to employment through community transportation options, and partnering with OATS Transit, we have been able to live out our mission to see people first and help our individuals to live the highest quality of life," Swope said. We are grateful for this partnership to help meet the transportation needs in Christian County."

Great strides have been made in the 39 years these tax levies have been in existence. Similar such tax levies are the Senate Bill 351, which provides resources to seniors over age 60. Missouri has 52 out of its 114 Counties that have passed a senior services levy.

Missouri Senate Bill 40 may mean little to most, but to those with developmental disabilities, it means a better way of life.

*Pictured above: Kerry Williams; Cover photo: Danielle Ball*

# City Bus Operations are Vital to Small Missouri Towns



The original City of Sedalia Bus (pictured right) and The Bus today (pictured above).



What began in 1971 as transportation for seniors grew rapidly in 1980 when OATS Transit took on more general public service thanks to available federal grants. Fastforward 48 years and OATS Transit now operates many city/municipality transportation services in addition to its other special projects. It takes several agencies and partnerships to make these routes successful. OATS Transit provides the drivers and buses, while the cities and other agencies provide much of the funding.

The number of agency/city partnerships has been on the rise in recent years, which is good for local residents and OATS Transit. Thanks to partners, cities such as Kirksville, Moberly, Lee's Summit, Sedalia and Troy (to name a few) now have deviated-fixed and/or demand-response routes which operate daily. Deviated-fixed routes mean they travel along a set route, but will deviate off that route (up to a set mileage depending on the city) to pick up passengers with advanced reservations who are unable to get to the designated stop.

The first city project OATS Transit took on was The Bus in Sedalia, MO, which began in May 1999. In September 2000, the Magic City Express in Moberly, MO was up and running. Kirk-Tran in Kirksville, MO then followed in December 2001, and several more have since started. In the last year alone, OATS Transit has taken on two new operations- RideKC in Lee's Summit and the Bagnell Dam Strip Express at Lake Ozark.

More routes like these are expected in coming years as cities struggle to find ways to trim their budget without losing services for their residents. "It only takes one person to come up with a great idea, but it takes partnerships to make those ideas successful," said Dorothy Yeager, OATS Transit Executive Director. "We are here to help any city/county municipalities who are looking for alternatives to public transit for their residents." OATS Transit schedules can be found online at [www.oatstransit.org/schedules](http://www.oatstransit.org/schedules).

## Awards & Recognition

- Recognized in National Rural Transit Assistance Program Best Practice Spotlight for Social Media Coverage.
- Received an award from National Rural Transit Assistance Program for best transit brochure.
- Agency Spotlight in Masonic Home of Missouri Outreach Magazine.

## Facilities

- OATS Transit has a total of 8 regional offices-5 OATS Transit owned buildings and 3 rented spaces, plus 4 satellite offices in rented spaces.

## Operations

- Safety is a top priority for OATS Transit. Last year OATS Transit had one preventable vehicular accident for every 166,495 miles of exposure.
- Safe Driver Awards were earned by 354 drivers for a combined total of 2634 years of safe driving, including 10 employees who earned a pin for 25 or more years, which is very impressive. A listing of the recipients of these awards is published annually in *The Wheel*.
- OATS Transit provided a total of 1,551,313 trips- or 821,368 operating hours.
- Our vehicles traveled 15,650,547 miles.
- OATS Transit sponsored The National Transit Institute workshop for advanced Mobility Device Securement.

## Volunteers & In-Kind Support

- The OATS Transit volunteer committees continue to work hard advocating for transportation and hold fundraising events. More than 560 volunteers serve on our county committees.
- All volunteer hours are used toward in-kind support dollars, which totaled 57,072 volunteer hours- a \$1,086,845 value.
- Many Missouri newspapers support OATS Transit by printing our bus schedules free of charge. 1,065 bus schedules were printed in local newspapers for an in-kind value of \$76,895.

## Board of Directors

- OATS Transit Board of Directors held 6 meetings this past fiscal year at the company headquarters in Columbia. All board meetings are open to the public. They adopt policies, annual Affirmative Action Plan, annual Budget, financial reports and advise staff on various matters. Officers are: President- Nolan McNeill; Vice President-Mel Sundermeyer and Secretary/Treasurer- Donna Turnbough.

## Funding

### Where it comes from...

Federal Transit Admin. Grants...	35%
Special Service Contracts.....	26%
Medicaid.....	15%
Area Agencies on Aging.....	5%
Rider/Local Contributions.....	6%
State Funding.....	8%
Other.....	5%

### Where it goes..

Driver/Dispatcher wages/Benefits.....	52%
Gasoline.....	11%
Direct Operating Support.....	10%
Indirect Administration Expense.....	6%
Repairs & Maintenance.....	6%
Vehicle Insurance.....	4%
Driver's Expenses & Operating Supplies....	4%
Capital Investment.....	7%

The firm of Graves and Associates, CPA's, LLC of Jefferson City, MO, audits the financial statements of OATS, Inc. annually. The Audit Report is reviewed and adopted by the OATS, Inc. Board of Directors. Copies of these financial statements are available upon request by contacting OATS at 2501 Maguire Blvd., Ste. 101, Columbia, MO 65201; telephone (573) 443-4516.

## Employees

- At the end of the fiscal year, OATS Transit had 762 employees.
- Numerous employees participated in OATS Transit Wellness for Life program with a variety of wellness activities & challenges held throughout the year.
- A total of 105 employees celebrated milestone anniversaries.

Pictured top to bottom, left to right: Courtney Riley; East Region rider & driver; Adam & Tyson Treasure with Northeast Region Driver Mike Hylton; Mid-MO Region Driver David Jeffries with a rider; Karen Rieser and her grandmother Mary.



## OATS Transit Receives Donation from Tyson Foods



OATS Transit received a \$5,000 donation from Tyson Foods, Inc. in Sedalia. In an effort to ensure Sedalia residents are provided reliable transportation to get to work and other basic needs, Tyson Foods presented OATS Transit with the donation in November 2018.

OATS Transit has been providing transportation to work in Sedalia since the 1980's. Federal funding in the 1990's through the Job Access and Reverse Commute grant provided partial funding to begin the route that currently runs to Tyson Foods in the early morning and afternoon. "We are grateful that companies like Tyson Foods are dedicated to giving back to the communities where they have facilities," said Tracy Walkup, Regional Director for OATS Transit in Sedalia. "Partnerships like this allow us to continue our mission of providing safe, caring and reliable transportation."

Tyson Foods is one of the largest employers in Sedalia. Last year OATS Transit provided more than 5,200 trips to Tyson to get employees to work, which operates Monday-Friday. "OATS Transit provides a user-friendly way for folks to get to and from their job- people that would almost certainly struggle to

get to work otherwise due to the lack of flexible public transit in the area," said Alan Johnston, Tyson Foods Complex Manager. "They are a great organization that we're proud to sponsor! On behalf of the Tyson Foods, Inc. Sedalia Complex and the many team members that take advantage of the service, we thank OATS Transit, and particularly their drivers, for the service they provide."

*Pictured: Dustin Tippin & Alan Johnston from Tyson Foods and Tracy Walkup & Brian Woolery from OATS Transit.*

## Boone Electric Provides Bus Match for Two New Buses

OATS Transit received a grant from Boone Electric Community Trust totaling \$20,000. In an effort to ensure Boone County residents are provided reliable transportation to allow them to live independently in their own communities, Boone Electric Community Trust presented OATS Transit with the check in September 2018.

Boone Electric Cooperative- who administers the Community Trust- is headquartered in Columbia, MO, but serves several other counties, like OATS Transit. "This donation from the Boone Electric Community Trust is possible because of the generosity of Boone Electric's membership," said Rhonda Proctor, Boone Electric Community Trust Coordinator. "Cooperative members can round up their utility bills each month as a way to give back to their community through our Operation Round Up program."

OATS Transit will be using these funds as the local match toward the purchase of two new mini-buses for Boone County residents. These buses are used by seniors, people with disabilities seeking rides to work, medical transportation and other daily living needs. 44% of the service provided in Boone County alone is for transportation to work, 38% for medical and the remaining for other needs such as nutrition, essential shopping and business errands.



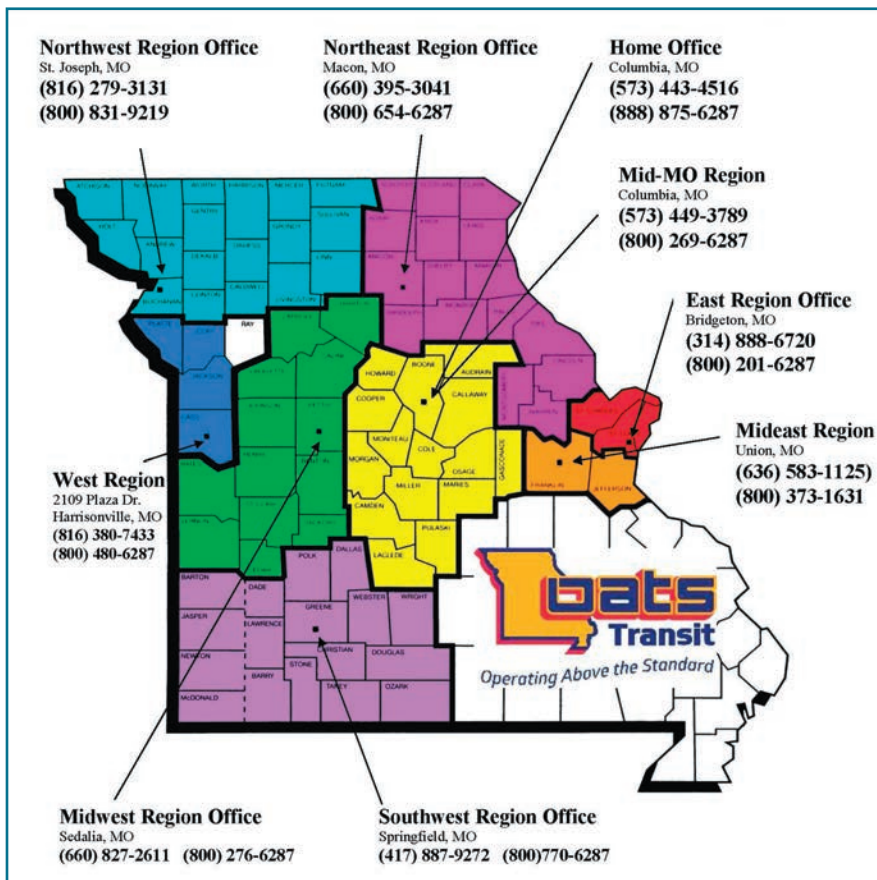
"We are grateful that organizations like the Boone Electric Community Trust are dedicated to giving back to the communities they serve," said Dorothy Yeager, Executive Director of OATS Transit. We are continually searching for local match funds that allow us to maintain in our fleet of over 800 vehicles. If you are interested in contributing for local bus match, contact the OATS Transit Development Office at 888-875-6287.

*Pictured : A group of Boone County Riders.*

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2501 Maguire Blvd., Ste. 101  
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## OATS Transit Service Area



## Winter Weather Policy

Our first concern at OATS Transit is for the safety of our riders and employees. While every effort is made to operate according to published schedules, weather conditions may cause traveling to be hazardous. As a general guide, OATS Transit service will be canceled in a county when school bus service is canceled in that county due to inclement weather. In the event localized weather exists during which school bus operations continue, the OATS Transit driver may still recommend to the Regional Director that service be canceled. Any service cancellation will be closely coordinated with the local contacts to assure all who were scheduled to go that day are notified of the cancellation. Keep in mind cancellations may be localized and not affect the entire region.



OATS Transit will be closed and regular routes will not be running on January 1 for New Years Day, January 21 for Martin Luther King Jr. Day & February 18 for President's Day.