

Passenger Trans-Actions

Summer 1998

Michigan Department of Transportation • UPTRAN • Passenger Transportation Division • "We Move People"
"Providing Michigan citizens with the best passenger transportation services through quality customer assistance."



PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PTMS)

PTMS UPDATE
by
PTMS Communications
Team

In July, we sent out a letter explaining our efforts to make PTMS fully operational. Along with the letter, you received a survey. To date, we have received 36 responses. A second mailing (via e-mail) was sent on August 6 to the 26 systems not returning the survey from our first request. Please complete the survey, if you haven't already, and return it to Russ Laverty. The information you furnish will help us to provide service that better meets your needs.

On July 29, there was a new release of PTMS. If you haven't received the new CD or are having problems installing it, please contact Kathy Urda at (517) 335-2575 or Jobi Schaeffer at (517) 335-2547.

At the annual meeting scheduled for October 13-15, in Big Rapids, there will be two PTMS demonstrations. Time constraints do not permit any full-scale training as part of the agenda. Please plan on attending the demonstration. Refresher training will be conducted on a regional basis from October through December 1998. The PTMS manual has been revised and is under review. Each agency will receive a manual at the regional training.

How's the hunt coming for the "ghost" of PTMS past? The hunt for "Red October" was easier. The leader of the ghost pack continues to elude capture, however, our technical ghostbusters have rounded up some of his kin. The reappearance of problems after a new release suggests our ghost dwells primarily within the TMS "framework" which is utilized in all of the management systems. The hunt continues.

It is our intent that PTMS be used to submit the annual application for FY 2000. The team is on track for the system to perform correctly in November to accommodate your submittals. You should also use PTMS to submit your quarterly Operating Assistance Reports and your reconciliation report due November 9. This will help to increase your familiarity with PTMS. On behalf of my co-workers, I thank you for your patience and willingness to assist us in bringing PTMS to the point of operational readiness. Should you have any questions regarding PTMS or our efforts to improve it, please feel free to call me, Russ Laverty, at (517) 335-2552 or e-mail: lavertyr@mdot.state.mi.us or Kathy Urda at (517) 335-2575 or e-mail: urdak@mdot.state.mi.us.



"M•DOT-Providing the highest quality transportation services for economic benefit and improved quality of life."



AROUND THE STATE



Election '98

SMART

Bus millage gets huge tri-county support. Voters in Macomb, Oakland, and Wayne counties backed a four-year millage renewal for the suburban bus system in a big way on August 4, 1998. A proposal to keep 1/3 mill for SMART service passed in all three counties.

Other millage primary election results:

Jackson - 1776 yes/
655 no - 5 years - \$428,000/
year

Marquette - 5908 yes/
2165 no - 5 years -
\$465,000/year

Cadillac - 2085 yes/
1518 no - 4 years -
\$216,000/year

Ogemaw - 1825 yes/
1149 no - 5 years -
\$86,744

Monroe/ Frenchtown

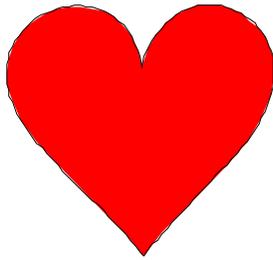
Also, passed in April by 80 percent of the voters was .35 mill in Monroe and .23 mill in Frenchtown. Both of these millages are good until April 2003.

The Ann Arbor Transportation Authority (AATA) was honored by ITS America for the implementation of its Advanced Operating System (AOS).

ITS America (Intelligent Transportation Society of America), the international organization that promotes the development and use of computer and electronic technologies to improve surface transportation, presented the Technology Implementation Award to AATA during its Eighth Annual Meeting at Cobo Hall, Detroit on May 4, 1998. Gregory Cook, AATA's Executive Director, accepted the award on behalf of the AATA team. Mr. Cook said, "AATA is pleased to be recognized by ITS America. We see the AOS as a tremendous step forward in providing efficient, reliable, customer friendly service to our passengers. This system will help us reach beyond the ordinary barriers of public transit to attract ridership from individuals who have other commuting options."

AATA brought on-line the first fully integrated transit communication operation and maintenance system in the United States. The AOS was implemented through a contract with Rockwell International and has quickly been recognized internationally as the future in public transit system management.

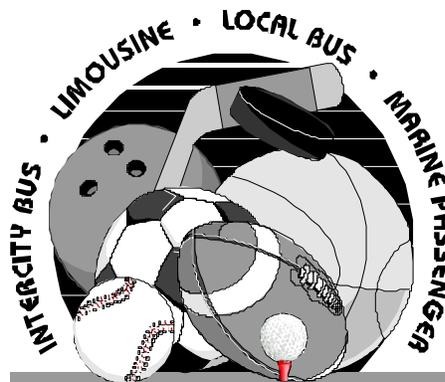
The system allows the operations control center to monitor vehicle location, operating conditions, and service performance status through the use of on-board computers and an 800 MHZ radio system. The vehicle relays this information over a data channel. When operators or dispatchers request voice communication, the radio switches to a voice channel.



HEART O' GOLD AWARD

The state's Heart O' Gold Award is given to small-bus drivers and other staff for going beyond their job duties and is a way of rewarding them for a job well done. This award is a way of bringing attention to drivers that are good Samaritans. For example, the bus driver whose passenger was choking and the driver performed the Heimlich maneuver to save her life; the bus driver whose passenger was in labor, and the driver drove her to the hospital; the bus driver who saw a three-year old behind the steering wheel of a moving car and pulled his bus in front of the car to stop it. Thereby resulting in no injury to the child or others; or the driver that missed a passenger on a day she would normally ride and went to her home and found her on the kitchen floor where she had been for over eight hours. These awards are usually presented at a board meeting or banquet. Also, these drivers are honored at the State of Michigan Small Bus Rodeo.

We would like to continue giving out the Heart O' Gold award, but we need you to recommend deserving individuals. Please call your project manager and share these acts of kindness stories with us.



Teaming Up For Transit

1998 PTD ANNUAL MEETING
October 13-15, 1998
Holiday Inn Conference Center
Big Rapids, MI

Agenda

Vendor Exhibits

TEA-21 Update

Breakout Sessions

Vendor Reception

Joe Caruso is the
Keynote Speaker

PTD Dinner & Celebration

UPTRAN Review

Registration Deadline
September 18, 1998

Hotel Deadline
September 18, 1998

Phone (800) 999-9069
Mention MDOT Annual Meeting

Fee remains the same as 1997
\$100 for 1/st person
\$50 thereafter

For Further information, call
Linda Tuttle at (517) 373-7645
or
e-mail: tuttlel@mdot.state.mi.us



TEA-21 (Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century)

The US DOT will conduct a series of TEA-21 outreach sessions to consult with its partners and customers before the implementation of the majority of TEA-21. FTA is the lead agency for the sessions in Lawrence, Kansas on Tuesday, September 22, 1998, in Chicago, Illinois on Wednesday, September 23, 1998, and in New York City on Thursday, October 8, 1998.



TEA 21

PROJECT ZERO TRANSPORTATION SURVEYS HIT THE STREET

Transportation providers and their drivers in the six initial Project Zero sites, Menominee, Alpena, Ottawa, Midland and Wayne counties, recently received transportation surveys from the University of Michigan (U of M) School of Business. The surveys are part of a Project Zero Transportation Evaluation made possible by a National Governors' Association (NGA) Grant awarded to MDOT. Surveys will also be administered to welfare recipients and workers at the Family Independence Agency and the Michigan Jobs Commission.

The data collected from the surveys and the focus groups held in March 1998 will be used to identify the successes and areas of improvement, as well as solutions and resources, needed to improve transportation services for welfare recipients traveling to job training programs and work sites.

U of M's final report containing the evaluation's findings and recommendations will be available this Fall. If you have any questions or comments regarding the evaluation, contact Rose Ann Ward at (517) 335-2598 or e-mail at wardr@mdot.state.mi.us.

Rideshare & Vanpool Programs Move to UPTRAN

Starting October 1, 1998, the rideshare and vanpool programs will move from the Transportation Planning Bureau to the Statewide Coordination Unit in the Transportation Services Section. This action was taken due to the statewide nature of the programs and since many of the local rideshare offices are housed within transit agencies. Oversight of these two programs is also expected to help with our transportation to work efforts. If you have any questions concerning this move, feel free to contact Lisa Funk at (517) 373-8746 or e-mail at funk1@mdot.state.mi.us.

Transit Benefit Program

The transit benefit program is a provision of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) that allows an employer to pay for an employee's cost of commuting to work. To be eligible for this program, the employee must commute to work by using transit or by participating in a vanpool program. The tax benefit is currently \$65 per month, but will increase to \$100 per month in the year 2003.

There are three ways for employers/employees to participate in this program. Employees can receive the benefit in addition to their current compensation, tax free. Another option is for employees to set aside pre-tax income to pay for commuting expenses. Employers also benefit from this option because payroll taxes are decreased. The third option is a combination whereby the cost of commuting is shared between the employer and the employee. The employer pays for part of the employee's commuting expenses tax-free in addition to their compensation. The remainder is set aside by the employee as pre-tax income in lieu of compensation.

This program is being investigated by the Statewide Coordination Unit as part of the transition of taking over the rideshare program. It is hoped that the Local Rideshare Offices and Vanpool Services Inc. can help to encourage employer participation in this program. It is also hoped that the local transit agencies will promote the benefits of this program when making employer contacts.

More detailed information regarding this program is attached to this newsletter. Questions can be referred to Lisa Funk at (517) 373-8746 or by e-mail at funk1@mdot.state.mi.us.

TRANSPORTATION TO WORK PROGRAM

You will recall that as part of Michigan's welfare reform efforts, \$2 million in state funds was appropriated in the MDOT FY 1998 budget to help remove transportation as a barrier to employment for public assistance recipients. Funds from this program will be distributed to the 26 Michigan Works! Agency regions based on total Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) caseload numbers by county.

Transit agencies and specialized services agencies have already participated in local coordination groups to develop plans for submission to the Michigan Jobs Commission (MJC). A team of representatives from MDOT, MJC, and the Family Independence Agency (FIA) have reviewed 22 plans, to date. Many of the plans propose to expand or enhance existing transit service to provide rides for public assistance recipients going to and from work, training sites, and child care.

Funding for transportation to work activities will continue as a result of \$2.2 million in MDOT's FY 1999 budget. It is anticipated that the funding will help support the expansion of the Governor's Project Zero program.

In addition to this state funded program, TEA-21 Access to Jobs Program provides competitive grants to local governments and nonprofit organizations to develop transportation services to connect welfare recipients and low-income persons to employment and support services. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has scheduled a listening session in Chicago, Illinois on October 22, 1998, to receive public input in drafting its program guidance for this new program.

Through these two initiatives, the barrier of transportation will continue to be removed while helping Michigan to get people back to work.

Michigan Small Bus Roadeo

Yippy Ti Yea!!! - The Michigan Small Bus Roadeo was held on July 29, 1998, and the "Bucken Brocos" were wild. Sixty-two bus drivers were rounded up and tamed the beast. First place honors in individual competition went to Len Schmidt from the Capital Area Transit Authority in Lansing, Tim Olson of the UP Community Services in Ironwood took second place, and third place went to Louise Forquer of the Isabella County Transportation Commission. These three individuals are eligible to compete in the national competition in New Orleans next May.



Len Schmidt

CATA's Len Schmidt, along with Doc Briseno and Mike Beech, also took top honors in the team competition. Vickie Reid, Val Lambert and Karen Reed captured second place for Midland Dial-A-Ride. Third place went to Marquette County Transit Authority's Gary "Pete" Farmer and Marie Rodorigo. A big thanks to all the agencies and drivers that participated in this year's Roadeo.



Phil Kazmierski, Doc Briseno, Mike Beech, Len Schmidt, Sandy Draggoo

What a game! The Lansing Lugnuts had their own horse to tame. Thanks to Hoekstra Truck and Equipment Company and Eldorado National for sponsoring the July 28th evening ballgame and dinner. Nothin's better than a night at the ball park chowin' down on good food and watchin' a good game.

Hats off to the judges from the police and sheriff's departments in the area and all the Passenger Transportation Division volunteers that made this Roadeo "one gol' darn good time."



Michigan Department of Transportation
James R. DeSana, Director
Urban and Public Transportation
Philip F. Kazmierski, Deputy Director
Kip Grimes, Administrator
Transportation Commission
Barton W. LaBelle, Chairman
Jack L. Gingrass, Vice Chairman
Lowell B. Jackson
John C. Kennedy
Betty Jean Awrey
Ted B. Wahby

Passenger Trans-Actions & The INTERCHANGE are quarterly news bulletins produced by the Michigan Department of Transportation, Passenger Transportation Division for the public transit providers in Michigan. Suggestions or comments may be sent to Linda Tuttle, M•DOT/Passenger Transportation Division, P. O. Box 30050, Lansing, Michigan 48909 or call (517) 373-7645. Alternative formats such as large print, braille, or audio-tape are available upon request by calling Rose Ann Ward, (517) 335-2598. Number of copies 500, total cost \$ 101.85, cost per copy \$.20.

FY 1999 BUDGET

Governor Engler recently signed Enrolled House Bill 5594, the FY 1999 appropriations bill for MDOT. This bill contains \$229.5 million in state funds for the Comprehensive Transportation Fund (CTF). This compares to \$243.9 million in FY 1998, a decrease of 6 percent.

The bill contains \$155.0 million for local bus operating assistance, a decrease from the \$162.1 million appropriated in 1998. Agencies over 100,000 population will receive 43.22 percent and agencies under 100,000 population will receive 51.87 percent of budgeted eligible expenses.

The bill also includes:

\$3.6 million for Specialized Services

\$12.0 million for Bus Capital

\$3.325 million for Service Development and New Technology

\$1.0 million for Regional Service Coordination

\$2.247 million for Work First Initiative/Project Zero

\$2.0 million for Municipal Credit

\$1.1 million for Marine Passenger

\$3.8 million for Intercity Terminals, Equipment, and Services

\$4.476 million for Ridesharing/Vanpooling

\$0.0 for Discretionary

The Service Development funding was significantly reduced and will be used to match federal funds. The Regional Service Coordination was also significantly reduced and will only enable existing projects to be continued into the 3rd year.

It is important to understand that the FY 1999 level of funding includes reappropriated funds the Legislature had statutorily set aside for the purchase of large buses. These reappropriated funds will not be available in future years. As was indicated last year, based upon the use of one time funding, the Department may not be able to sustain the same level of operating assistance appropriated for fiscal year 1999 in future fiscal years.

The Passenger Transportation Division Annual Meeting scheduled in Big Rapids on October 13-15, 1998, will include additional discussion regarding the FY 1999 budget.

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Survey Of Line Haul Systems Complete

Wayne State University completed the first phase in establishing a uniform GIS data base for line haul transit agencies by surveying those agencies and their MPOs. The purpose of the survey was to identify what information is most useful to those agencies and determine their data priorities. After the priorities are determined, the work program will be revised to identify data items that can readily be accomplished within the one-year contract. Results from the survey and project status will be published in future issues of Trans-Action.

This project is being conducted by Wayne State University through the Michigan Transit Centers for Excellence (MTCE) Program that was established by Passenger Transportation Division to develop transit expertise within six of the State's universities to support MDOT's local transit agency study and research needs.

The purpose of the project is to provide a uniform GIS data base, consistent with national standards, that will support MDOT's Public Transit Management Systems (PTMS) and Public Transit Strategic Plan. The networks and associated data bases can also be used by MPOs and transit agencies to develop local transit models, electronic bus schedules, facility inventories, real time schedule monitoring and other Information Technology (IT) applications. This is not intended to duplicate other work currently being done by those agencies but may enhance or supplement their work. A GIS data base for the demand response systems has already been developed by MDOT's Bureau of Planning. The 1995 demand-response service are boundary files for use in updating the sketch planning model. Ridership and service information from the management system as well as selected demographic data from the statewide model was brought in for model development. The boundary files will need to be updated for future applications.

Oversight for completion of the Fixed Route Project is provided through the Statewide/Urban Travel Demand Modeling Technical Committee (SUMT). The SUMT Committee is made up of technical representatives from MDOT and volunteer MPO's and transit agencies. Agencies wishing to participate on the SUMT Committee or desiring additional information on this project should contact Dick Nellet, Bureau of Transportation Planning, at 517-335-2958 or e-mail at [nellettr@mdot.state.mi.us](mailto:nelletr@mdot.state.mi.us).

Vehicle Maintenance: Awards for Excellence

Sixty agencies received "MDOT's Award of Excellence" at the annual Transit Vehicle and Equipment Seminar held June 17-19, 1998.

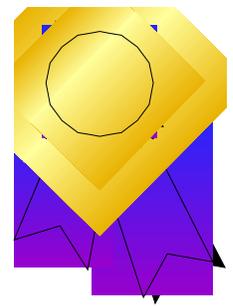
The maintenance monitoring program for over 120 transit agencies began in May 1994 and is based on MDOT's random inspection of vehicles and vehicle records for adequacy in the areas of general condition, safety, and mechanical soundness.

The following transit agencies were recognized for their excellent vehicle maintenance programs:

1998 Awards -

Allegan County Community Mental Health
Alma Dial-A-Ride
Alpena Dial-A-Ride
Ann Arbor Transportation Authority
Antrim County Transportation
Baraga/Houghton/Keweenaw
Bay Area Transportation Authority
Battle Creek Transit
Bay Metropolitan Transportation Authority
Benzie County Elders, Inc.
Branch Area Transit Authority
Cass County Transportation Authority
Charlevoix County Public Transit
Cheboygan County Council on Aging
Chippewa/Luce/Mackinac Counties
Community Action Resource Authority, Inc.
Copper Country Workshops, Inc.
Crawford County Transportation Authority
Delta Area Transit Authority
Detroit Department of Transportation
Eastern Upper Peninsula Transportation Authority
Eaton County Transportation Authority
Friendship Centers of Emmet County
Gladwin City/County Transit
Gogebic County Public Transit
Grand Rapids Area Transit Authority
Greenville, City of
Growth & Opportunity, Inc.
Handicapper's Information Council
& Patient Equipment Locker
Harbor Transit
Hartland Senior Center
Holland Dial-A-Ride
Houghton, City of
Huron Transit Corporation
Interurban Transit Authority
Ionia Dial-A-Ride
Iosco Transit Corporation
Isabella County Transportation Commission
Jackson Transportation Authority
Kalamazoo Metro Transit System
Lake Erie Transit
Ludington Mass Transportation Authority
Lutheran Home of Frankenmuth

Manistee County Transportation, Inc.
Marian E. Burch Adult Day Care & Rehab
Marquette County Transit Authority
Marshall Dial a Ride
Mecosta/Osceola County Area Transit
Muskegon Area Transit System
Newaygo County Commission on Aging
Ontonagon County Public Transit
Otsego County Bus System
Pioneer Resources
Presque Isle County Council on Aging
Saginaw Transit System Authority
Saginaw County Commission on Aging
Sault Ste. Marie Dial-A-Ride
Thunder Bay Transportation Corporation
U. P. Community Services
Van Buren Public Transit
Yates Township



The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Center for Transportation Education and Development

Schedule of Courses

**Native American Transit Systems: Effectively Connecting
Our People**

September 14-15, 1998

Coordination Strategies: Models of Excellence

October 5-6, 1998

Designing Travel Training for Transit Agencies

October 12-14, 1998

Establishing Non-Emergency Ambulance Service

TBA

**For more information, please call Wyatt Osato at (414)
227-3332.**

‘Feelings’ carry marketing clout

Which United States president appears on the \$20 bill?

According to a Gannett poll, less than 20 percent of us can answer this questions correctly.

The answer is “old rough and ready,” Andrew Jackson.

I recently spoke at the Inc. Magazine’s national marketing conference and used this question to open my speech. You may ask yourself, “What in the world does Andrew Jackson being on a \$20 bill have to do with marketing?” (If you are, you’re in good company, because that’s exactly what the CEOs in my audience were thinking.)

My POINT IS that even if you had the kind of marketing budget and penetration to be able to put your name and face in front of every single person in this country, every day for most of their adult lives, you are not guaranteed to have enough of an impact that they’ll remember you.

Successful marketing requires that the target audience not only think of you (your product or service), but also is provoked to take the desired action (i.e., purchase your product and/or service).

IN TODAY’S WORLD of high-energy marketing, product awareness is not, in itself, powerful enough to drive sales. The target audience actually requires an emotional or experiential attachment to your product or service. Think about Nike shoes. Are they the best shoes on the market?

Does it even matter? Nike learned a long time ago that the quality of their product was less important than the image of their quality.

So, Nike stopped trying to market shoes and instead began marketing feeling. In the marketing biz this is called “branding.”

HOWABOUT Michelin tires? Are they the best? Years ago Michelin realized that they needed to sell to a different audience in a different way. Their advertisements used to be geared toward men and espouse the quality of the tire—how it gripped the road, how it handled turns, etc.

Then they began an ad campaign that focused on marketing feeling. You know the ads. One that comes to mind features a cute little baby sitting in a raincoat in the middle of the tire while the announcer says, “Michelin...because so much is riding on your tires.”

ALL OF A SUDDEN, moms and dads were walking into tire stores and feeling like they were more responsible parents if they purchased a set of Michelins. The purchasers were successfully persuaded into thinking—or, more likely, feeling—that Michelin tires were superior to the competition, without ever learning a single fact about Michelin tires.

In this information age, we consumers are bombarded with more advertising from more sources than ever before. Some of the most successful companies today have completely abandoned trying to educate us toward their products or services, and have begun to “emote” us toward their product.

THE AUTO industry has taken this so far that one can watch a car commercial on television and not even realize it is a car commercial until the company’s name appears at the end of the spot.

Small business would do well to learn from this trend and give up trying to market themselves totally on the merits of their product and service.

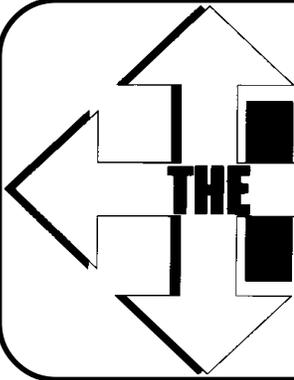
A good way to do this is to analyze target market and find out what people like. What makes them feel good? What do they relate to? What pushes their buttons? Then find a way that you can successfully attach your product or service to that which makes them feel good.

It’s important to remember that marketing is not about how good it is, but how good it feels.

Reprinted from the News Herald Newspapers with permission from Caruso Leadership Institute. Success Strategies column by Joe Caruso.

The Marketing Subteam of the Management Advisory Team is initiating this Marketing Column in the Passenger Trans-Action in the hopes of “sharing the good stuff.” Please forward items of interest to Linda Tuttle, fax (517) 373-7997 or e-mail: tuttlel@mdot.state.mi.us

MARKETING COLUMN



INTERCHANGE

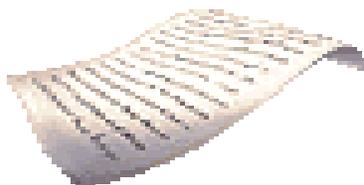
Supporting Mobility and Accessiblity for All Michigan Citizens

EVENT 1998 PREVIEW

A reminder to mark your calendars for this year's statewide disability conference, the **EVENT '98**, which will be held at the Holiday Inn South in Lansing on October 27 and 28, 1998. Dan Wilkins, this year's keynote speaker, will address all ages with his message about disability awareness, coping, empowerment, and the human spirit. His talks are laced with humor, reflecting the nature of a person who deals with whatever life hands him with intelligence and wit. His talent and wit as a graphic designer is displayed in his "right to the point" disability-related t-shirts which have been a hot item at past **EVENT** conferences. Following dinner on October 27, participants will be entertained by British singer and songwriter Johnny Crescendo whose songs promote the independent living spirit and message.

Technology will be everywhere during the **EVENT**. **EVENT** planners are using the phrase "learning opportunities" instead of "workshops" to increase the types of offerings and opportunities outside of the conference. Many of the learning opportunities will be built around assistive technology with plenty of opportunities for hands-on experience. The **EVENT** will conclude with a rally on the Capitol grounds. The Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) is working closely with **EVENT** planners to arrange transportation from the conference site to downtown Lansing for the finale at the Capitol.

REGISTRATION FORM IS ATTACHED.



OSA/MDOT SPONSORS VOLUNTEER DRIVER BEST PRACTICES SEMINAR

The Office of Services to the Aging (OSA) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) are sponsoring a volunteer driver seminar on Tuesday, September 29, 1998, in Gaylord. The seminar is made possible by funding provided by the OSA.

Volunteer driver programs are an important means of increasing the mobility of Michigan's older adults especially in rural areas that lack transportation resources. The seminar which is targeted to transit agencies, specialized services agencies, aging and disability organizations, and others is intended to promote greater utilization of volunteer driver programs by educating the participants about successful programs and practices. Additionally, the seminar will help participants identify and overcome perceived barriers to implementing volunteer driver programs.

Randy Parlor of the Michigan Insurance Bureau will be on hand to cover important issues such as liability and insurance rates, and to answer any questions participants might have regarding insurance issues as it relates to volunteer drivers. If you have any questions regarding the seminar, please call Steve Betterly, OSA, (517) 373-4089 or Rose Ann Ward, MDOT, (517) 335-2598.



REDUCED FARE ELIGIBILITY AND IDENTIFICATION STUDY

Congratulations to Joe Richards, Midland Dial-a-Ride, for recently receiving a Master of Science Degree in Administration from Central Michigan University. Joe's master thesis entitled "Eligibility and Identification for Reduced Fare Riders at Midland Dial-a-Ride" proposes guidelines to determine eligibility of reduced fare passengers with disabilities and recommends an instrument to identify all eligible reduced fare riders based on the needs of the Midland Dial-A-Ride. Two surveys were administered to different groups of Dial-A-Ride users. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the paper abstract or summary/recommendations, please call Rose Ann Ward at (517) 335-2598 or e-mail at wardr@mdot.state.mi.us.

ADA UPDATE by Rose Ann Ward

Recently, I have received a number of calls from transit agencies regarding whether or not they can "require" a passenger who uses a wheelchair to be secured with a lap belt and shoulder harness while riding the bus. The answer is no. Under the ADA, a transportation provider can require that the wheelchair itself be secured or restrained in the securement location and can deny service if the passenger refuses. However, a passenger can decline the use of a lap belt and/or shoulder harness. This doesn't mean that the driver cannot strongly recommend or suggest it for safety reasons. It only means a driver should not force the issue by denying service to the wheelchair user if they decline the use of a lap belt and/or shoulder harness.

There are a couple of reasons behind this logic - 1) the person's disability or physical condition may prevent them from wearing a lap belt or shoulder harness; and, 2) requiring that the person with a disability buckle up when no one else on the bus is required to do so is not considered equal treatment.

Hopefully, this clarifies for some providers what appears to be a confusing area of the law.

The focus of the INTERCHANGE is to establish a forum for information-sharing among groups and provide information regarding programs and activities that affect seniors and persons with disabilities. If you wish to share information with others through this bulletin, or would like to see specific issues addressed, please write or call Rose Ann Ward, UPTRAN, P.O. Box 30050, Lansing, MI 48909, (517) 335-2598.