In early 2011, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) will be implementing the Intercity Bus Assistance program to support intercity bus service throughout the State. As a result of recently passed legislation, the Intercity Bus Assistance Program (Wis. Stat. 85.26) enables WisDOT to contract with providers of intercity bus service or make grants to political subdivisions to support intercity routes. This program is timely, as recent years have brought significant cuts to intercity routes that have resulted in a lack of connectivity in rural areas, as well as a lack of connectivity between Wisconsin’s major metropolitan areas. Also, prior to this program WisDOT could only provide assistance to local governments and not contract directly with service providers, making the sponsorship process quite challenging.

Of critical importance to the 85.26 program is the continuing appropriation of $1.2m in State funds to match federal 5311 funding. The ability to directly contract with providers and contribute to a more significant portion of a service project’s operating loss are two significant tools that WisDOT intends to use in order to catalyze the development of intercity bus service.

Improving connectivity to or between major metropolitan areas that currently lack convenient or direct intercity bus connections is one key objective of the program. For example, there is no convenient intercity service connecting major cities like Madison and the Green Bay/Fox Valley area. The same can be said for connections between Madison and Central Wisconsin. There are also rural areas within the State that lack intercity connections, particularly in Southwestern and much of Northern Wisconsin. Another objective is to facilitate meaningful connections to other modes of transportation, including local public and specialized transit, intercity rail and confirming that there are connections to other intercity bus routes. The program will also serve to maintain existing levels of intercity bus service.

To date, WisDOT has been working to develop the implementation details of the 85.26 program. This process has included the establishment of an internal working group, outreach to the region’s intercity bus operators, and various presentations to the public transit community. Currently the request for proposals for service is posted, and near the end of the year WisDOT will begin the process of selecting contractors. During the first half of 2011 WisDOT hopes to start putting new and improved intercity bus service on the road on a pilot basis, and as a result offer more mobility options and foster better connections between communities. If you have any questions or would like updates about intercity bus in your area, please contact Joe Kapper at joseph.kapper@dot.wi.gov.”
October, 2010
The Honorable Herb Kohl
United States Senate
Washington, DC, 20510

Dear Senator Kohl:

The undersigned organizations are writing to express our strong support for your work to introduce the Senior Transportation and Mobility Improvement Act, which addresses transportation issues of critical importance to Wisconsin’s older adults. As advocates for older adults and people with disabilities on a daily basis, we see how important mobility options are to their health, independence, and quality of life.

Older individuals represent the fastest growing demographic in this country. In fact, the older population in Wisconsin is expected to increase 90 percent between 2010 and 2035, constituting fully 20 percent of Wisconsin residents. Along with longevity comes a continued desire to remain connected to the community, and a greater interest in participating in the work force, aging-in-place, and accessing needed social and health services.

One-fifth of older adults do not drive, yet transportation alternatives are very sparse in many parts of Wisconsin, particularly in rural areas and small towns. Transportation is consistently at or near the top of services for which Wisconsin social service agencies receive the most requests. Without adequate transportation options, many seniors will be at risk for increased isolation and may be forced into very costly and unnecessary institutionalization. While SAFETEA-LU provided some increased funding for senior transportation, significant new resources are needed to address the estimated $1 billion per year in unmet transportation needs for seniors – a level of need that will only increase over the next five years.

We commend your work in drafting the Senior Transportation and Mobility Improvement Act. We believe the following goals and objectives of the bill are particularly critical:

- Increase the amount of resources for community transportation programs for older adults and persons with disabilities under FTA’s Section 5310 program;
- Give states added flexibility under the 5310 program to utilize funds for operating costs;
- Expand the transparency of the 5310 program through new reporting standards;
- Provide additional resources to help serve the needs of Native American elders under the Section 5311(c) tribal transit program;
- Strengthen the coordinated public transit human service planning process;
- Direct new resources to the National Center on Senior Transportation to provide technical assistance and seed grants to innovative community programs; and,
- Establish a supplemental FTA mobility management program for older adults and persons with disabilities.

The next highway and transit authorization provides an excellent opportunity for Congress to advance this initiative and your leadership on this important legislation is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

AARP Wisconsin
Aging & Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin
Coalition of Wisconsin Aging Groups
Dane County Area Agency on Aging
Easter Seals Southeast Wisconsin
Greater Wisconsin Agency on Aging Resources, Inc.
Jewish Family Services of Milwaukee

Jewish Federation of Madison
Rehabilitation for Wisconsin in Action
Wisconsin Alliance for Retired Americans
Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Wisconsin Board for People with Developmental Disabilities
Wisconsin Jewish Conference
Wisconsin Women’s Network

Read the premier issue of DigitalCT: Mobility Management!
By Katie Tucker

Every half hour, Monday through Friday, six buses stop at Grand River Station to load and drop off passengers. But La Crosse’s new transit center is more than just a central bus hub. With residential and commercial space, city officials say the development plays a primary role in revitalizing downtown business.

Situated in the heart of downtown La Crosse, Grand River Station celebrated its grand opening in August 2010. The event was a community celebration that included federal and state officials and three La Crosse Mayors, present and past, which were passionate about the project from start to finish. High school bands and other local musicians provided local entertainment. The afternoon included a ribbon cutting, dedication and tours of the transit center and model apartments including a green roof, fitness center, and theater. Fifteen of the apartments in the station are designed for “live/work” artists or entrepreneurs that work from home. Those who have moved in feel a central downtown location close to public transportation is an ideal setting for their work development.

Architecturally designed as a transit orientated development (TOD), Grand River Station mixes retail and residential uses built close to public transportation. The station contains the city’s regional transit center, 92 mixed-income rental apartments, ground floor retail space, and parking. La Crosse Municipal Transit Utility (MTU) manager Keith Carlson hopes the new station will bring more people to downtown La Crosse. “Our hopes for the future are for further development as a result of transit here. The additional housing will bring more people to the downtown area. The project will improve the downtown neighborhood through more business, housing, and quality public transportation” Carlson said.

Like a ripple effect, Carlson said more residents in the downtown vicinity equates to a positive effect on the local economy. The project is expected to generate a tax base for the City of La Crosse, and a significant revenue stream for the transit system to pay for operation and maintenance of the facility and expanded transit services.

“It makes sense. The more people you having living in downtown the better off your retail is going to be,” La Crosse’s Downtown Mainstreet Inc. Director Tim Kabat said.

The transit center will link the rest of the city, including University of Wisconsin La Crosse and the several health centers with the downtown, where restaurants, bars and shops like rapidly cropping up. Additionally, Grand River Station is looking to expand its transportation options. A deal with Jefferson Lines is currently in the works to provide intercity bus service from Minneapolis and Madison through the hub. The new center greets riders with several rider-friendly amenities including electronic signs to tell riders when the next bus is scheduled to depart, an indoor waiting area, public restrooms, vending machines, and a customer representative.

Plans for the new transit center stemmed after MTU had serious concerns with pedestrian safety. At the old street corner location, riders were forced to cross traffic to transfer between buses and battle ice and snow in the winter months. “MTU had no identity downtown. We had no way to communicate with riders because of a lack of facility. As a single business we hope to improve the image of public transit in La Crosse in hopes of gaining new riders,” Carlson said “In the partnership with the city and entities we will continue to strive to create downtown development. This partnership makes the whole system much better.
U-Pass Ridership Continues to Grow at UWS

By Tom Elwell, Duluth Transit Authority

SUPERIOR – Since joining the Duluth Transit Authority’s (DTA) free unlimited-ride U-Pass Program in the fall of 2007, ridership at the University of Wisconsin, Superior (UWS) has increased by more than 55%.

“Free” is the magic word for the DTA’s successful U-Pass Program, which was established in 2000 at the University of Minnesota, Duluth (UMD). The College of St. Scholastica and Lake Superior College in Duluth joined the program in 2001.

The DTA contracts with these colleges to provide unlimited-rides, anywhere, anytime for full-time students, faculty and staff who get a “free” ride by swiping their college photo I.D. on the fare-box. U-Pass contracts are based on previous ridership counts at participating colleges.

The DTA, which provides public transit services for the City of Superior, had marketed monthly bus passes at UWS since 1988; but few students took advantage of the 28 percent UWS discount they received when buying their DTA pass on campus. There were, however, plenty of on-campus parking available to students at that time and gas prices were still relatively low. UWS students lobbied administrators to join the U-Pass Program for several years before they got onboard in 2007. They wondered why UWS was the only college in the Twin Ports that was not on the DTA’s “free-ride” U-Pass Program.

In the summer of 2007, conditions were right to meet with UWS administrators about joining the DTA’s U-Pass Program. Gas prices were high, on-campus sustainability groups were touting the benefits of mass transit and USW was expanding its campus. UWS administrators agreed to try the “free-ride” U-Pass Program as a one-year marketing demonstration project.

Today, UWS is a full-fledged U-Pass participant and ridership on campus has grown every year since. U-Pass ridership at the four Twin Ports campuses accounts for more than 500,000 rides per year. The DTA expects U-Pass ridership to surpass the 4 million rider mark some time next spring.

UWS is served by the DTA’s Duluth-Superior route which runs right through campus. Recently, the DTA installed a “real-time” schedule sign in the new UWS Yellow Jacket Student Union, which lets students know when the next bus will be departing campus.

If you have questions please contact the Portage County Travel Training program at 715-341-4490.

NHTSA Seeks Comment on Study of Booster Seat Restraints

By National Safety Council Membership News Alert

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration on Nov. 11 announced it is seeking comment by Mar. 8 on a technical report that shows a reduced risk of injury for children who are placed correctly in motor vehicle child safety restraints.

The report is based on an analysis of statistics from the Crashworthiness Data System and 17 combined years of state data from Kansas, Washington and Nebraska. It focused on the effects of early graduation from child restraint seats to booster seats and of early graduation from booster seats to lap and shoulder belts.

Findings from the report show that among 3- and 4-year-olds, the risk of injury is reduced when children are restrained with the recommended child restraints, rather than in booster seats. Meanwhile, among 4- to 8-year-olds, injury risk is reduced when they are restrained by booster seats rather than lap and shoulder belts.
Experience the convenience and flexibility of this 11-week online program. Learn how to apply GIS knowledge in transit planning and operations to increase efficiency and effectiveness within your organization.

This course is an asynchronous online course for any transportation professional who wishes to implement thematic mapping software in their planning, marketing or study.

Course Contents:

SECTION I (weeks 1-2): Introduction to GIS
- Understanding the Utility of GIS in Transit

SECTION II (weeks 3-4): Fundamentals of Transportation Planning
- Decision Oriented Planning
- Characteristics of Riders/Market Demand Analysis
- Transit Performance Evaluation
- Route Location Models

SECTION III (weeks 5-8): Concepts for GIS in Transportation Planning
- How GIS Enhances the Transportation Planning Process
- How to Integrate GIS into the Planning Process
- What Types of Data can be Analyzed Using GIS in a Transportation Planning Context (Tiger files, census data)
- Bringing the Results to the Internet

SECTION IV (weeks 9-10): Database Models
- Database Structure for Transit GIS
- Linear Referencing

SECTION V (week 11): Applications of GIS in Transportation Planning
- Best Practices in Applying GIS
- Advances in Technology
- Other Technological Applications (AVL, GPS, Route Scheduling)

Course Details:
Instructors: Professor William Huxhold, Dr. Edward Beimborn, Dr. Zhong Ren-Peng, Mr. Eric Fowler
Early Bird: $495 (register by Feb. 7)
Fee: $595
CEUs: 3.0
Program No. 7510-Z089

RTAP Scholarship Information: Wisconsin rural transportation providers are eligible for the RTAP scholarship of 80% reimbursement of any course fees. For more info on the RTAP scholarship, please contact Jacob Miller at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation: (608) 264-7335 or Jacob1.Miller@dot.wi.gov.

To Register:
Register online at sce-cted.uwm.edu, or call 414-227-3200 or 800-222-3623.

For More Information:
Contact Ken Woodall at email woodall@uwm.edu or 414-227-3332

Public Courses Offering for Spring 2011

What to look forward to after the holidays and old man winter? Growth in Spring! The Center of Transportation Education and Development (CTED) is offering five public courses this fall that could assist your transportation agency with best practices for:

- Scheduling and dispatching
- Vehicle operations and maintenance
- Passenger assistance and sensitivity skills training as a trainer
- All facets of public transportation
- Transit policy development

The courses are:
- Efficiencies in Paratransit Scheduling and Dispatching; April 11-12
- Transit Fleet Management; May 2-3
- Passenger Assistance: Certification for Trainers; May 9-11
- Fundamentals of Public Transit (also available per session); May 16-17
- Operational Policy Development for Public Transportation; May 23-24

RTAP Scholarship Information: Wisconsin rural transportation providers are eligible for the RTAP scholarship of 80% reimbursement of any course fees. For more info on the RTAP scholarship, please contact Jacob Miller at the Wisconsin Department of Transportation: (608) 264-7335 or Jacob1.Miller@dot.wi.gov.

For more details about the courses, please see link below of CTED brochure:

Download pdf (424KB)
For registration information, visit or call (800) 222-3623.
Section 37.173 of the American’s with Disabilities Act states that: “Each operator of a public or private entity which operates a fixed route or demand responsive system shall ensure that personnel are trained to proficiency...”

In this training the instructor will take attendees through a pre-trip inspection, checking over safety equipment including fire extinguisher, triangles, first aid kit, etc. Vehicle handling, locating controls and exits, and evacuation procedures are also covered. Additional topics include what to do in case of passenger illness or injury, vehicle breakdown, hazardous driving conditions, accidents, and any additional concerns.

**Sample Agenda:**

9am    Introductions and Expectations
Concerns
Ice Breaker: Reaction Time Exercise
Pretest

9:30am  Vehicle (on vehicle)
Pre-trip inspection
Safety equipment: fire extinguisher, triangles, first aid kit, etc.
Know how to handle vehicle, where controls and exits are, etc.

10:30am Break

11am    What To Do: Passenger Illness or Injury
11:30am What To Do: Vehicle Breakdown

Noon    Lunch

1pm      What To Do: Hazardous Driving Conditions
1:25pm   What To Do: Accident
2pm      Break

2:15pm   What To Do: Evacuation
CTAA Evacuation Video
Evacuation Exercise

3:15pm   Conclusions, Questions, Posttest, Evaluations
3:30pm   Adjourn

**Equipment Needed:** TV/VCR, Easel with plain paper and markers or blackboard/chalk, or dry-erase board and markers (any one of those 3 types of writing surfaces would be fine), and a table or podium to work from. Also need a fully equipped vehicle for conducting a pre-trip inspection. If different kinds of vehicles are used, one of each should be available.

The Passenger Assistance Safety and Sensitivity; Advanced Defensive Driving Skills; and Safety, Emergencies, and Evacuation workshops are largely funded by the Wisconsin Rural Transportation Assistance Program. The attendee’s portion of the cost is $25. The fee covers instruction and materials. Even though the course is already largely subsidized by RTAP, each driver can still use an RTAP Scholarship to cover 80% of the $25 fee. They are also customized to be delivered to your agency. Our class start times are not set in stone, and we remain as flexible as possible based on the agency needs. For information on scheduling a workshop, please call Ken Woodall at 888-560-3382 or 414-227-3332.
CTED presents this curriculum that serves as guide for training drivers in passenger assistance skills necessary for transporting people with disabilities. It is based on a program that evaluates driver skills using proficiency measures and is founded in adult learning principles and practices. This training package meets the requirements for passenger assistance training as identified in the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

**Sample Passenger Assistance Agenda (plus lunch and individual hands-on training):**

- Introductions
- Brief introduction by instructor of training and philosophy of their organization.
- Drivers introduce themselves and give reason they are interested in becoming specialized transit drivers.
- Passenger Assistance Pretest
- Covers the Driver Training Manual and Workbook regarding appropriate terminology, the 10 commandments of etiquette, and myths and facts regarding people with disabilities.
- Disability Awareness Training Module and Lesson Plan
- Guiding a Person Who is Blind or has Low Vision
- Disability Awareness and Passenger Assistance Issues
- Passenger Assistance Techniques with Wheelchairs
- Wheelchair Securement and Lift Operations - Classroom Discussion, Demonstrations and Driver Practice

(The above portion takes approximately 4 hours depending on the training needs of the participants.)

- Lunch
- Wheelchair Securement and Lift Operations: In the vehicle demonstrations and testing using skill assessment sheets. (This training session is approximately 10-15 minutes per new driver. This is time used to take drivers out to the vehicles and become familiar with the equipment.)
Advanced Defensive Driving Skills Workshops help keep Wisconsin rural and specialized transportation drivers skilled and trained to proficiency.

Drivers attend a classroom-style presentation prepared by the National Safety Council. The curriculum emphasizes decision-making, uncontrollable driving factors and other defensive driving strategies.

Sample agenda of training program

- **Section 1 Objective**: To increase awareness of the need or and the benefits of defensive driving/Video.
- **Section 2 Objective**: Identify the conditions of driving; Increase awareness of the risks and hazards in adverse driving conditions; provide defensive driving techniques to reduce the risks and hazards of those driving conditions.
- **Section 3 Objective**: Identify common unsafe driving behaviors that result in crashes and violations; Explain how specific conditions may increase the hazards and risks of these unsafe behaviors; Explain defensive driving techniques to reduce the incidence of these unsafe driving behaviors.
- **Section 4 Objective**: Video/Identify aggressive driver behaviors that result in crashes and violations; Identify causes of aggressive driving actions; Increase awareness of personal aggressive driving behaviors; Identify ways to maintain self-control behind the wheel; Identify defensive driving techniques to avoid confrontations with aggressive drivers; Create a personal plan to maintain control in stressful driving situations.

Workshop should run in approximately 4.5 hours with one or two breaks.

This class includes participation and discussion. Many drivers come to us with concerns that they have in relation to their everyday responsibilities.