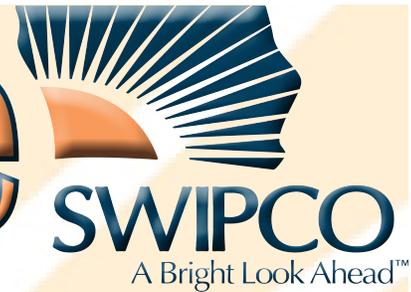


# The Update



July 2022

Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby

## SWITA 'Ride Transit Week' Brings Communities Together for Fun

More than 150 community members made their way to the SWIPCO office lot in Atlantic on Wednesday, June 15 and the Lakin Human Services Campus in Council Bluffs Thursday, June 16 for celebrations of public transit in southwest Iowa.

SWITA staff hosted a "Transit Fun Day" in Atlantic that included games and activities for children, free shaved ice courtesy of Louie's Shaved Ice, and to purchase a \$5 slice of Hungry Spartan Pizza. The event was attended by members of the public and local media including a live remote from KS95 in Atlantic.

On Thursday, June 16 SWITA staff participated in a Ride Transit Day in cooperation with Omaha's Metro transit service, Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands, Salvation Army, Heartland B-Cycle, and Pottawattamie County Public Health. Students learned about non-motorized transit options, learned how to ride a bus, received educational materials about public transit, tested out an electric bicycle, and even got to draw on a SWITA bus with washable markers.

Ride Transit Week was proclaimed in 7 southwest Iowa communities and recognized the work of SWITA, Omaha's Metro transit system, and the Iowa Department of Transportation to deliver public transportation to residents of all ages.



TOP RIGHT: Children blow bubbles with help from SWITA Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton. MIDDLE RIGHT: SWIPCO Grants Specialist Mackenzie Bandow helps her children color on the SWITA bus. BOTTOM RIGHT: Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Midlands attendees learn about transit during an event in Council Bluffs. LEFT: Transit Fun Day attendees in Atlantic enjoy pizza and shaved ice next to the live radio remote.

## In this Issue

- Comprehensive Plans Can Help Your Town.....2
- TRANSIT TALK* School is Almost Here.....2
- New Driver Onboarding Requirements.....3
- Staff Member Spotlight.....3
- Birthdays & Anniversaries**.....4
- SWIPCO Grant Apps Boost Downtown Housing.....4

**SAVE THE DATE:**  
*SWIPCO Annual Meeting*  
**September 22, 2022**  
*Page County*  
**More details to come!**

## Comprehensive planning can help your town create vision for the future

Dani Briggs  
Planning Technician II

A comprehensive plan is a legal document under Iowa Code 414.3. This document provides the basis for zoning, acts as a guide for policy decisions, is a catalyst for goal setting and consensus-building, and acts as a source for community information. These plans are meant to be flexible documents that change as the jurisdiction's priorities change, meaning they need to be reviewed regularly for relevance.

Participation by the public during the planning process is the foundation for a successful comprehensive plan and ensures the plan works for the community and residents while providing a level of transparency in community planning. Recent plans have utilized traditional public meetings, open house meetings, social media outreach, and surveys to gather public input.

Input gathered from public participation, as well as input from community leaders, is used to cover a variety of topics including the current built environment, economic resiliency, quality of life, and future land use, and establish goals with accompanying action items.

The planning process for updating a comprehensive plan can take approximately 12-18 months to complete. To ensure the success of the planning process and ultimately of the plan itself, a community should be ready to commit to the process. This includes budgeting for the plan, establishing a steering committee, and most importantly, committing their time and effort not only for the creation of the plan, but implementing the plan as well.

Without the proper commitment from a community, the plan can stall or fail altogether. Although the process and plan can be daunting, it can serve as a powerful tool for your community!

SWIPCO is available to help cities work through the comprehensive planning process from start to finish. If you have questions, or to get started, call (712)243-4196 or send an e-mail to me at [danielle.briggs@swipco.org](mailto:danielle.briggs@swipco.org)!

## Birthdays & Anniversaries



**Matthew Lee**  
Building Inspector II  
Birthday on July 23

## TRANSIT TALK

### Time to Get Registered!

It sure feels like school just ended last week, but with the 4th of July holiday in the review mirror, it's time to begin talking about student transportation for the fall!

SWITA offers rides to school for students not served by the regular school bus within the city limits of Atlantic, Glenwood, Harlan, and Red Oak at a rate of \$1.50 each way.

For students who are otherwise served by the regular school bus in a town where SWITA offers taxi service, rides are available at our regular rate of \$2.50 each way.

If you have questions or want to learn more about SWITA's student transportation options, including scheduling and registration, please give us a call at the SWITA office, 1-800-842-8065 or (712)243-2518.

You can also register online by visiting [www.swita.com](http://www.swita.com).

## We're Hiring Drivers!

Drivers are needed across the SWITA service area, including in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, and Pottawattamie Counties.

Candidates must have or be willing to obtain a Class C CDL with Passenger Endorsement, complete DOT physical and drug screening.

SWITA offers competitive wages starting at \$16 per hour, flexible scheduling and up to full time employment. Full time drivers are eligible for benefits including health, vision, dental, short term disability, and IPERS.

If you or someone you know is interested in driving with SWITA, please reach out to [daurine.petersen@swipco.org](mailto:daurine.petersen@swipco.org) or call (712)243-4196 to request more information!

Look for the full job post on [www.swipco.org](http://www.swipco.org). SWIPCO offers a generous wage and benefits package including IPERS retirement.

# Entry level driver training process brings new opportunities for improved driver onboarding

In February, requirements for Entry Level Driver Training (ELDT) were updated across the country. This change provided SWITA an opportunity to review and update its procedures for onboarding new drivers.

Each new driver for SWITA must have or obtain a Class C Commercial Driver's License (CDL) with a passenger endorsement. This requires a written test, followed by ELDT.

ELDT requires the completion of computer modules that help a new driver learn various parts of their role, using learning tools meant to keep our drivers, passengers, and fleet of vehicles operating safely.

All SWITA drivers will gain behind-the-wheel experience prior to their driving test with Transit Director Mark Lander and Maintenance Assistant Mike Ballinger, who bring many years of experience to their training roles.

As with all new endeavors, the changes to this process present challenges and opportunities. The SWITA leadership are ready to help guide our new drivers on the road to success!



PICTURED ABOVE: SWIPCO Human Resources Coordinator Daurine Petersen helps new driver T.Y. Eram become familiar with the computer onboarding software. The computer-based training takes about one week from start to finish.

## STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Though his official title is technically Maintenance Assistant, Michael Ballinger fills several roles at SWIPCO. His primary responsibilities include ensuring that all physical infrastructure at SWIPCO buildings are well-maintained and functional, assisting with mechanical repairs on SWITA buses as needed, and conducting behind-the-wheel training with new hires who will drive for SWITA.

Mike has been with SWIPCO for over two years, and his work has evolved over that time. "I just go wherever they tell me, every day is different," he said in an interview. "I really love getting to help people every chance I get." Most recently, Mike has been instrumental in implementing the Entry Level Driver Training process from the Department of Transportation. The new training process requires both behind-the-wheel and computer-based learning, in addition to a drive test with the Iowa DOT.

To prepare drivers for their drive test, Mike spends time with new drivers to help them become familiar with pre-trip procedures and safety protocols required for a successful career as a SWITA driver. He says most of what SWITA teaches drivers is common sense, but a good refresher to ensure our passengers are as safe as possible.

Mike lives in Atlantic with his significant other, Sherri. The couple enjoy being outdoors together. Mike likes to go fishing and hunting. Mike has one son, Brandon, who is 28.

PICTURED BELOW: Mike Ballinger works on a behind-the-wheel training plan for a newly-hired SWITA driver.



## SWIPCO Grant Applications Boost Downtown Housing

Affordable housing in southwest Iowa recently got a boost from the Iowa Economic Development Authority. A grant administered by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) will provide nearly \$1 million to renovate and add upper-story housing units in the Cities of Atlantic, Clarinda, Glenwood, Logan, and Stanton.

“Housing is just one of the obstacles employers are facing as they seek to attract new staff,” SWIPCO Community Development Specialist Mackenzie Bandow said. “In addition to improving the aesthetic of downtown, this grant will help these towns ensure there is affordable housing for more of their residents.”

The projects include the following:

- \$300,000 for a complete interior overhaul of the second level of the building at 300 Chestnut Street in Atlantic. The renovation will add four new one and two-bedroom rental units.
- \$200,000 to renovate and update two upper-story housing units at 115 E Main Street in Clarinda, providing two of the only quality, updated rental units near the city center.
- \$200,000 to renovate and add two upper-story housing units in the second and third stories of the historic Hinchman Building on the Glenwood city square. Major components of the overhaul will include electrical, plumbing, and HVAC upgrades.
- \$178,984 to renovate and add two upper-story housing units in the city of Logan. The project includes a complete overhaul of the second level of the building at 307 E 7th Street.
- \$100,000 for a complete interior overhaul of unfinished second story space in the property at 312 Broad Avenue, along with exterior improvements and deck construction to add outdoor living space.

## SWIPCO is Hiring!

### Community Development Specialist:

Do you like to be out in the community helping local leaders and stakeholders solve complex problems? Do you want a career that is diverse and challenging? Do you have a background in local government, planning, or economic development? Are you organized and get excited about seeing a project you helped start become a reality? If these things interest you, consider becoming a community development specialist at SWIPCO. Our community development staff are both planners and doers—meaning that where many traditional planning jobs leave the implementation to someone else, our staff not only identify issues and develop solutions, but are there to help get it funded and built. Diverse backgrounds can meet this role and typical candidates come into these positions with either a planning, public policy, political science, or related degree. SWIPCO is open to hiring at a variety of levels from entry level (0-2 years' experience) in the \$40k's to higher levels of responsibility and compensation for those coming in with relevant experience.

### Grants Specialist:

The backbone of SWIPCO's successful programs is our ability to manage large and complex grant programs. The way we do this is by having smart, dedicated staff who specialize in making sure that we and the communities we serve are doing what needs to be done per grant regulations. Grants specialists learn the ins and outs of programs and help our members navigate through some complex rules and procedures. They also help individuals who are working with us to have their homes repaired or accessing other services navigate application paperwork. Often behind the scenes, grants specialists need to be detail oriented, organized, and focused on how we can best help others while staying in compliance with multiple programs. Experience with grants is a major plus, but not a set in stone requirement. A background in a paralegal position, administrative assistance, bookkeeping, or social services are common to these positions. Wage is DOQ but starting wage is from \$17-\$20 per hour.

*Look for the full job post on [www.swipco.org](http://www.swipco.org). SWIPCO offers a generous wage and benefits package including IPERS retirement. These positions may be eligible for hybrid remote work after an initial training period.*

## SWIPCO STAFF ROSTER

**John McCurdy, AICP**  
Executive Director

**Rhonda Oliphant**  
Finance Manager

**Michael Ballinger**  
Maintenance Assistant

**Mark Hansen**  
Fleet Maintenance Specialist

**Christy Pederson**  
Transit Assistant

**Phil Richter**  
Building Inspector I

**Mark Lander**  
Transit Director

**Kersten Abild**  
Transit Dispatcher

**Dani Briggs**  
Planning Technician II

**Sandy Hansen**  
Grants Specialist III

**C.J. Petersen**  
Communications Coordinator

**Kristen Templeton**  
Transit Coordinator

**Ann Anstey**  
Grants Specialist II

**Tracy Clark**  
Transit Assistant - Operations

**Dee Holtz**  
Administrative Assistant

**Daurine Petersen**  
Human Resources Coordinator

**Kristine Stokes, AICP**  
Community Development Specialist

**Karen Mauer**  
Administrative Services Director  
**Mackenzie Bandow**  
Community Development Specialist

**Tammy DeBord**  
Grants Specialist II

**Cindy Johnson**  
Transit Dispatcher

**Matthew Lee**  
Building Inspector II

**Nicole Rhodes**  
Grants Specialist II

**Leslie Wright**  
Community Development Specialist

**Teresa Wright**  
Finance Specialist