

The Update



August 2022
Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby

SWITA.com: New website to help make transit more accessible

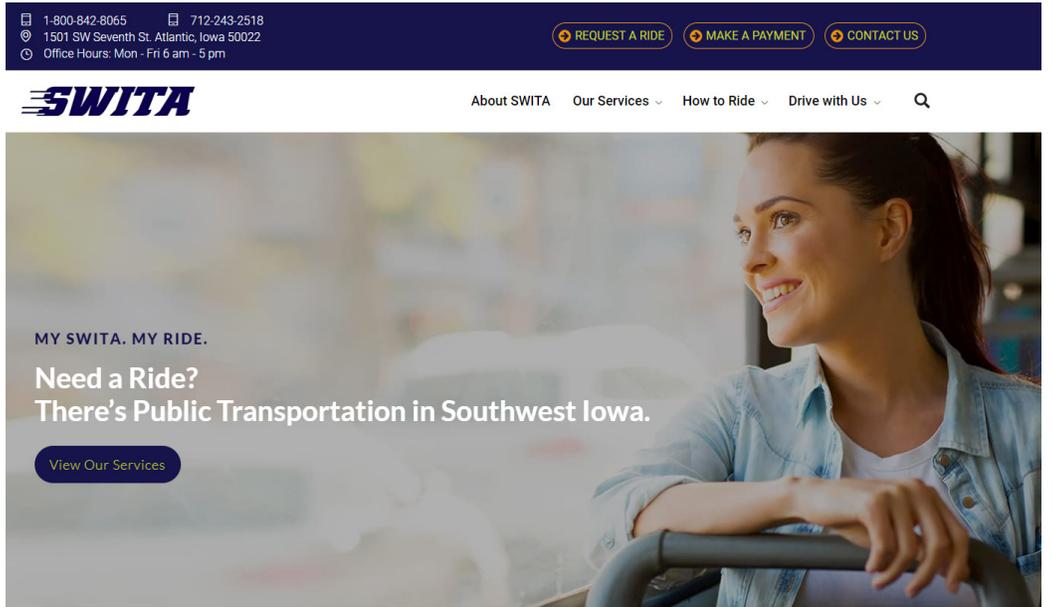
SWIPCO, which operates Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA), is pleased to announce the launch of a new website focused on its public transit services.

“Southwest Iowans are very used to seeing SWITA buses,” said SWIPCO Executive Director John McCurdy. “The question is, do they know that SWITA’s public transit service is for everyone? With SWITA.com’s launch, we will be able to reach many more people who can utilize public transportation.”

McCurdy added that many in the region assume SWITA’s transit service is only available to the elderly or disabled, but he notes that is only part of the service. “All can ride, and we have many who ride SWITA to work and to school—you have somewhere to be, and SWITA takes you there.”

The new website includes information about each of the types of transit services SWITA operates, including student and medical transportation, taxi, and work routes. Riders can pay their bill and will even be able to request a ride through the website in the near future. Not to worry—the old-fashioned way of calling into the office still works, too.

McCurdy strongly encourages everyone to take a few minutes to check out the www.swita.com website, not only to see about the services that are available, but also to let us know of any issues that they may see. To quote McCurdy, “We’ve been looking at this thing for months, but the volume of information on the website is huge, so we are more than happy to get any feedback to improve the site.”



PICTURED ABOVE: SWITA.com’s home page features options to pay a bill, schedule rides and learn more.

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SWIPCO Annual Meeting
Lied Library
100 E Garfield St., Clarinda
September 22, 2022
9:00 a.m. Tours
12:00 p.m. Lunch Program
RSVP by September 9:
swipco.org/annual-meeting

Realities of today's world mean everyone must be part of hazard mitigation

Dani Briggs
Planning Technician II

The past few years have reminded us that our region is not untouchable when it comes to natural and man-made disasters. We've witnessed extreme flooding, human disease, Derechos, and more, reminding us just how important hazard mitigation planning is.

The Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 provides a legal basis for State, local and tribal governments to participate in hazard mitigation planning as a condition to receive certain types of non-emergency grant assistance. This act was intended to facilitate communication between state and local authorities and to challenge jurisdictions to identify methods and implement procedures prior to the occurrence of a disaster. These plans strive to reduce the loss of life and property and to break the cycle of disaster, damage, and reconstruction.

It is crucial that all cities and school districts participate in their county's plan to ensure they are as prepared as possible for potential hazards and to make sure they are eligible for potential funding for future projects.

As part of the planning process, jurisdictions will create mitigation actions that should be viewed as a "wish list" of projects the jurisdiction would like to complete. In order to receive funding for a project, the project must be identified in a FEMA-approved hazard mitigation plan.

SWIPCO currently aids in developing and updating county-wide hazard mitigation plans which must be updated every five years. To ensure adequate communication and the best outcome possible from the process, jurisdictions are asked to attend roughly three meetings to provide input and updated information for their area.

If your city, county, school district, or other impacted entity is interested in being part of your region's hazard mitigation planning, please reach out to me at danielle.briggs@swipco.org!

Birthdays & Anniversaries



Phil Richter
Building Inspector I
Birthday on August 15

John McCurdy
Executive Director
Birthday on August 21



Sandy Hansen
Grants Specialist III
15 Years of Service on August 13

Mark Lander
Transit Director
8 Years of Service on August 18



Kristen Templeton
Transit Coordinator
8 Years of Service on August 18

TRANSIT TALK

Kristen Templeton
Transit Coordinator

You may have already heard that there's a new public transit website launching, SWITA.com. What you may not know is that it's a product that's been nearly a year in the making.

Recognition of the need for a better transit website came about from experiences shared by our drivers, riders, and dispatch staff, who expressed a desire to have a more streamlined process for using public transit in southwest Iowa.

As the world continues to change and business and transactions continue to move online, SWITA recognizes the need to continue to improve and adapt to the changing environment.

Working with a web developer and marketing firm, we were able to put together a site that is user-friendly and meets the needs of all of SWITA's stakeholders.

The new website, as with any new technological innovation, may experience growing pains and need updates as we ease into using it, and that's alright.

Here at SWITA, we appreciate your support and patience as we strive to better serve you!

SWIPCO's 47th Annual Meeting to be held in Clarinda Thursday, September 22

Please join us Thursday, September 22 as we gather in Clarinda to hold the 47th SWIPCO Annual Meeting. The day will commence with a welcome and coffee and rolls at 9am at the Lied Public Library. From there, we will embark on SWITA buses and tour the old Carnegie Library Art Museum, businesses on the square that have benefited from grants secured by SWIPCO, and the Glenn Miller Birthplace Museum, which also benefited from SWIPCO grant writing in the past. We'll make it back to the Lied Library in time for lunch, presentation of partnership awards, and SWIPCO's annual report.

This is a great opportunity to not only learn about the services available through SWIPCO, but to also see a community shine and demonstrate how working together can accomplish big things.

The lunch and tour are all free and open to the public. Register today by going to www.swipco.org.

STAFF MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

SWIPCO has a new face in the Community Development department. Ashley Hayes has joined the staff as a Community Development Specialist. She will work with SWIPCO communities to continue to improve the region through community and economic development activities and planning.

"I have been a resident of Southwest Iowa for most of my life and have a great appreciation for our communities and the people," said Hayes. "SWIPCO is an excellent way to assist our area communities and to further help them continue to thrive in this region of rural Iowa."

Hayes is a graduate of Atlantic High School and has a bachelors in psychology from Buena Vista University. She brings many years of experience in city government and economic promotion through her time on the city council in Atlantic and as the program coordinator at the Atlantic Area Chamber of Commerce. Hayes



"SWIPCO Community Development Specialists are Jacks of all trades and must be able to link community needs with the resources that are out there," said John McCurdy, Executive Director of SWIPCO. "Ashley's varied experience, including in city government, bring valuable insight and skills to our organization as we work with our most important clients, the cities and counties of Southwest Iowa."

Reflecting on lessons I learned in my time as SWIPCO's Communications Coordinator

As I sit in my office at SWIPCO for what is, incidentally, the last four hours of my tenure as SWIPCO's Communications Coordinator, the Iowa Department of Transportation map on the wall catches my eye. So many times over the last 7 months, I've glanced up to find a town I hadn't heard the name of before, or to visualize the region SWIPCO serves, and sometimes as a two-minute break from the words I'd been writing on the computer screen. Before I came here, I'd never have considered a large, 48" by 60" map to be office decor, but I digress.

I grew up in Atlantic, where I saw SWITA buses regularly throughout my youth. I didn't think much of these vehicles at the time, being much more interested in the day-to-day trials and tribulations of being a kid. What I *did* know for certain, though, was that those buses were for the elderly and the disabled (that's what I'd heard from the adults in my life). In fact, up until the moment I interviewed for this role at SWIPCO, I did not know that SWITA transit is available to anyone in southwest Iowa.

SWITA, of course, does serve a fair number of elderly and disabled riders. But to limit its scope to that seems, in retrospect, to make what we do seem so small. No, what I've come to learn is that there's much more to the work SWIPCO and SWITA do than can easily be communicated. That's where I came in.

The work that SWIPCO does isn't always something that can be wrapped neatly in a bow or put in a greeting card. It's complicated: some of our most important projects have involved building back from natural disasters, navigating the physical toll and emotional cost that can weigh on even the strongest of communities. SWIPCO's professionals have made it easier for southwest Iowans to access mental health care, for the food insecure to eat, and for hundreds of families to have the hope of a new home.

The stories nobody really knows are the real reasons SWIPCO's work matters. In my time here, I have fallen in love with making a difference in ways people don't always notice--especially as I've learned about the myriad ways this organization makes our corner of the world a better place. And it has been an honor and a privilege to share those stories with all of you.

My role at SWIPCO was new when I started; we built the communications shop from the ground up. It sounds a lot more glamorous than it has been (it's just one guy sitting behind a computer screen). But it has been a joy to see people understand just a little bit more about our mission and what we provide to the citizens and communities we serve. While I am leaving this role behind to pursue another, I like to think I've left my mark on an organization that means so much to so many people in southwest Iowa. SWIPCO has certainly left its mark on me.

At the end of the day, our work is often like an oversized map on a wall; you have to see the bigger picture while being able to separate out what parts are important, and then make a plan to get where you hope to arrive. Or, maybe I'm just a sentimental person who believes in something and has learned a lot more than he bargained for. Either way, I'm happy that our paths have crossed. Respectfully yours,

C.J. Petersen

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