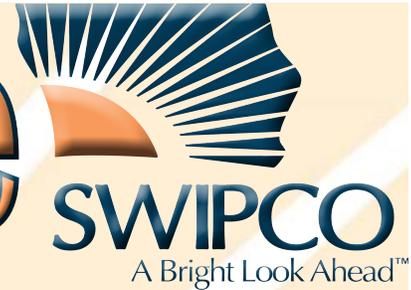


The Update



May 2023

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

Spring Drivers' Meeting

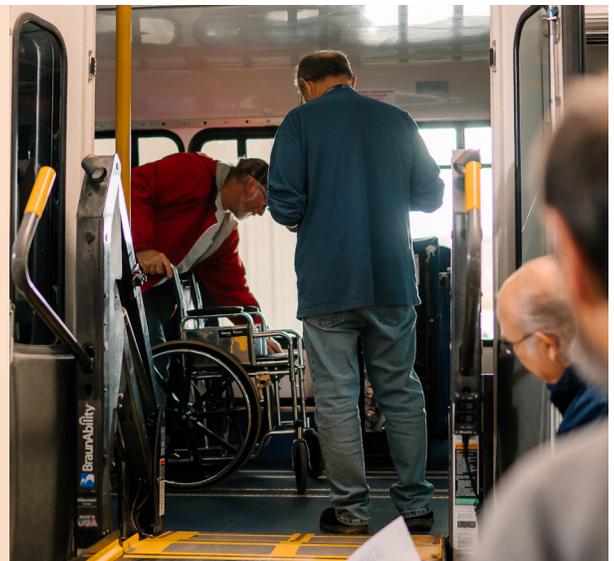


On April 29, the Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) team made up of administrators, office staff, and 51 drivers came together for a day for professional development, training, and recognition. The biannual Drivers' Meeting, held in spring and fall, was held at Atlantic Golf and Country Club and the SWITA facility in Atlantic.

Drivers refreshed their skills, engaged with office staff and their fellow drivers, and celebrated each other. The theme for the training was "Back to Basics" with a strong emphasis on safety. SWITA prides itself on being a safe, affordable transportation for all and this year's meeting made sure to focus on that. Drivers attended breakout sessions on topics such as wheelchair securement, vehicle inspections, incident reports, etc.

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Spring Drivers' Meeting (Continued)

Another highlight of the spring drivers' meeting is awards. Recognition awards were presented to Driver of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Kelly Davis Servant Leadership Award, staff years of service recognition awards, and Outstanding Driver Awards.

All drivers have the opportunity to nominate their fellow drivers for the awards, which allows drivers to give their input on who they feel has shown commitment to service to riders and are dedicated SWITA team players.

Dean Driskell received Driver of the Year based on his ability to go above and beyond for his fellow drivers, his passengers, and dispatchers. He is a friend to everyone. He knows his passengers well and they enjoy having him as a driver. He is knowledgeable and great at sharing his knowledge with others, especially those who are new. He takes pride in his job, and you can see that in the way he cares for his bus and his passengers.



Kristen Templeton (right); Dean Driskell; Mark Lander (left)



Kristen Templeton (right); Wray Ludington; Mark Lander (left)

Wray Ludington received Rookie of the Year based on how quickly and efficiently he has taken on the SWITA driver role. He is eager to learn and often is cross training on other routes. He has been a "GO TO" driver when it comes to getting shifts covered, day or night. He has a very good understanding of many routes and is proficient in driving them safely. He is pleasant to work with and he goes above and beyond for his passengers and dispatch.

Kristen Templeton, Transit Coordinator, received the Kelly Davis Servant Leadership Award recognizing her commitment to the SWITA team and her ability to serve that team with distinction. The Kelly Davis Award honors the memory of former Transit Coordinator Kelly Davis, who passed away in 2022. This award is presented yearly to an employee who demonstrates

a desire to serve their community and team in the way that Kelly did, with a sense of purpose and selflessness. Kristen currently oversees six transit staff and 75 drivers. She is responsible for the majority of the scheduling for the agency and has to match the right drivers with the right routes. Kristen has a positive attitude and works hard every day to get the people in southwest Iowa where they need to go.

This year's Outstanding Driver Awards went to Jon Parsons (Cass), Lynn Baumbach (Montgomery), Mike Ames (Page), Don Lantz (Harrison), and Terry Musich (Shelby).

Years of Service Recognition was presented to the following drivers: Mike Clark (5 years), Dennis Nelson (5 years), Dennis Giedd (5 years), Jerry Josephson (5 years), Larry Anderson (15 years), Jacqueline Williams (15 years), and Barbara Smithson (15 years). Also recognized were the following retired drivers: Roger Matson, Bernie Budwell, Dave Aylsworth, Richard Retz, and Carol Rehm.



Kristen Templeton (right); Mark Lander (left)

SWIPCO Strengthens Local Economies and Communities through Business Loans

Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) has over \$500,000 available to lend in its Business Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) program and is looking for qualified applicants. These RLF dollars may be used in conjunction with local lenders, to provide gap financing, or to serve businesses that have otherwise been turned down from a financial institution.

RLF funds may be used by a new or an existing business with loans available up to \$125,000. These loans can be used for a variety of business related expenses including equipment purchases, working capital, and purchasing inventory but not for buildings or building renovations. As loans are repaid into the pool, the fund revolves back out to other businesses for the program.

SWIPCO established the business revolving loan fund in 2009 with grants from the US Economic Development Administration and the US Department of Agriculture to help businesses in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Page, and Shelby counties create and retain jobs. In the past 14 years the fund has made 28 loans to businesses and loaned \$1,637,950 to businesses regionally. Over 150 jobs have been created or retained by the fund.

The minimum loan is \$10,000 and the goal is to create or retain one job per \$10,000 loaned. Currently the interest rate is a very competitive 4%. With interest rates on the rise, this is a major benefit for businesses needing gap financing.

“This program is a great resource for new or existing businesses to get additional financing at a competitive interest rate that they aren’t able to get without the program. With a low interest rate and a loan closing fee of 1% of the loan award, businesses can get the gap financing they need and be able to pay back the loan in a reasonable timeframe,” stated John McCurdy, SWIPCO Executive Director.

To apply, businesses must complete and return an application to SWIPCO. Applications are reviewed by SWIPCO staff, and the final decision is made by a loan committee, which meets monthly. Application materials and guidelines can be found at www.swipco.org under the Business RLF tab. For additional questions contact Erin Hudson at 712-243-4196 or erin.hudson@swipco.org. SWIPCO is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

SWIPCO Completes CDBG Projects in Three Cities

Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) recently completed 3 owner-occupied housing rehabilitation Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) projects in Dexter, Fontanelle, and Leon. These grants addressed updates to HVAC, electrical, plumbing, windows, doors, siding, roofing, handicap accessibility, and lead based paint, bringing the homes up to Iowa’s minimum housing standards. The grants assisted 14 low to moderate income households, with a total of \$530,837 spent in grant funded repairs.

Unusually, these projects are outside the normal SWIPCO service area of the counties of Harrison, Shelby, Pottawattamie, Cass, Mills, Montgomery, Fremont, and Page. But, in this case SWIPCO had previously contracted with Southern Iowa Council of Governments (SICOG), based in Creston, to provide the inspections portion of their housing CDBG repair projects while SICOG continued to provide overall project administration. In February 2022 due to SICOG being unable to administer CDBG projects due to staffing issues, SWIPCO contracted with the cities to provide administration services for the CDBG rehab projects in nine communities that were currently underway. The three communities of Dexter, Fontanelle, and Leon were the first of these projects to be completed and the remaining are well on their way to completion.

Driver's Spotlight

Dwayne Hemminger drives a bus for Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) in Harlan. He provides taxi rides in Harlan two days per week and provides an average of 40-50 rides per day. He also provides shuttle rides to get disabled individuals from Harlan to Denison for work two days per week. Drivers like Dwayne are vital to rural communities, as they allow people to get around when they otherwise would have no access to transportation on their own.

SWITA serves eight counties in southwest Iowa and has 100 vehicles and around 75 drivers. SWITA has special routes for disabled individuals who need to attend day habilitation services or work. The agency has work routes that transport workers to employers such as OSI and Monogram Foods. It also offers medical transportation, student transportation, has a summer fun bus, and provides a range of other transportation services. SWITA buses are ADA accessible, and service is open to everyone.

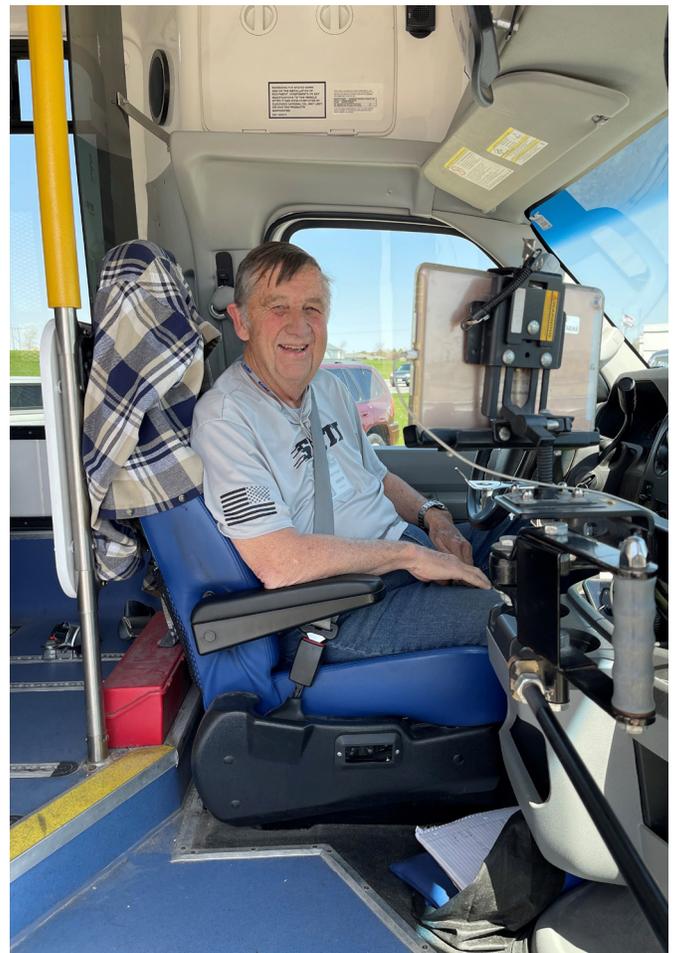
"I think the best part about this job for me, is the people who ride on my bus," Dwayne said. "I have had people tell me that they are so thankful for the rides I provide. I am 70 years old, and I could retire if I wanted, but I am not ready to stop driving for SWITA yet."

Dwayne has been proudly driving for SWITA for the past 18 years. He was born and raised in the Harlan area, and he owned a video rental store in town for 25 years with his late wife until online video services phased out his business. "I sort of took this job to supplement my income and it was a blessing in disguise," Dwayne said. "I really like working for SWITA and it feels good to help people out who couldn't get where they need to go without this service."

Dwayne has two daughters who now live in Wayne, Nebraska and Springfield, Missouri, and he enjoys visiting them when he can and spending time with his two grandsons. He also enjoys spending time his free time working on his hobby of restoring old vehicles. He is an avid car collector and takes his 1957 Chevy pickup, which he restored on his own, to car shows for fun.

SWITA by the Numbers

	March 2023	YTD
Total Miles	194,391	1,497,320
Total Hours	10,971	87,022
Total Rides	52,078	398,114
		<u>March 2023</u>
Workforce Rides		8,682
Taxi Rides		5,210
Student Rides		7,031
Elderly Rides		3,071
Disabled Rides		27,231
Other General Public		853



\$25,000 Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Grant Awarded to Sidney, Creston, and Corning

The cities of Sidney, Creston, and Corning were each awarded \$25,000 grants under the Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Planning Community Development Block Grant (CNRP-CDBG) Program by the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) will administer the grant for these cities.



SWIPCO
A Bright Look Ahead™

Each community will use the funds to hire a firm to write an action plan/analysis on what projects could/should be done in the target area in order to help revitalize that area. These cities can then use the action plan/analysis to apply for grant funding of up to \$1.75 million to implement the plan. Potential projects fundable under the grant would need to comply with the national objectives of HUD to benefit low and moderate-income persons and to prevent or eliminate slum and blight. Examples of potential projects could include single-family housing rehabilitation, commercial facades, parks and open spaces, sidewalks and trails, street repair, and streetscaping.

SWIPCO assisted the city of Sidney with applying for the Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Planning grant. The application discussed the potential for housing rehabilitation, trail development, a basketball/pickleball court, and sidewalk development to aid in revitalizing the targeted area of the city. While outside of the SWIPCO region, SWIPCO was hired to administer the Creston and Corning grants.

SWIPCO routinely provides grant writing and administration services to its member communities in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby Counties and has brought over \$129 million in grants to the region in the last year alone.



Ann Anstey
Grants Specialist II
Birthday Month May



Dani Briggs
Lead Planner
Birthday Month May

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Dani Briggs
Lead Planner
5 Years of Service



Dee Holtz
Administrative Assistant
Birthday Month May

From the Desk of the Executive Director...

John McCurdy
Executive Director

It takes an incredible team to accomplish the amount of service to the community that happens each and every day because of the work of the SWIPCO/SWITA team. This past month we were fortunate to gather together all of our transit drivers, as we do twice a year, and spend additional time on training and staff appreciation.

Many of the recent drivers' meetings have had to spend a large amount of time on things that don't directly impact our riders in ways that they can see—such as learning new software and implementing new timekeeping procedures. These are important to running an agency, but aren't necessarily noticed by the clients. That's why we chose on this meeting to focus on the basics—especially proper wheelchair procedures, vehicle inspections, and recording and reporting incidents. Accidents are extremely rare on SWITA vehicles, but when you drive 2.5 million miles a year they unfortunately do happen, and we want to make sure our drivers are prepared to prevent the incidents that they can, and properly respond to mitigate the impacts to themselves and the public if something does happen.

Are you up for a challenge and want to help your community? If you are, I strongly encourage you to consider driving for SWITA. It's a great way to serve your community with a great group of co-workers and clients!

SWIPCO is Hiring

Community Development Specialist II

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 this sound like you, consider becoming a community development specialist at SWIPCO. Full job posting is available on our website at: <https://www.swipco.org/career-opportunities-rfp-s/>

Upcoming Grant Information:

- Federal Recreational Trails Grant
- due October 1
- State Recreational Trails Grant
- due July 1
- City Parks/Open Spaces REAP Grant
- due August 15

SWIPCO STAFF

John McCurdy, AICP
Executive Director

Mark Lander
Transit Director

Erin Hudson
Community Development Director

Karen Mauer
Administrative Services Director

Rhonda Brown
Finance Manager

Daurine Petersen
Human Resources Coordinator

Kersten Abild
Transit Scheduler II

Ann Anstey
Grants Specialist II

Mary Auten
Grants Specialist I

Michael Ballinger
Maintenance Assistant

Dani Briggs
Lead Planner

Tracy Clark
Transit Scheduler III

Tammy DeBord
Grants Specialist III

Mark Hansen
Fleet Mechanic

Sandy Hansen
Grants Specialist III

Ashley Hayes
Disaster Recovery Coordinator

Dee Holtz
Administrative Assistant

Mindy Jensen
Communications Coordinator

Cindy Johnson
Transit Scheduler I

Aaron Koontz
Grants Specialist I

Matthew Lee
Building Inspector II

Christy Pederson
Transit Reporting Coordinator

Nicole Rhodes
Grants Specialist II

Phil Richter
Building Inspector I

Kristen Templeton
Transit Coordinator

Teresa Wright
Finance Specialist