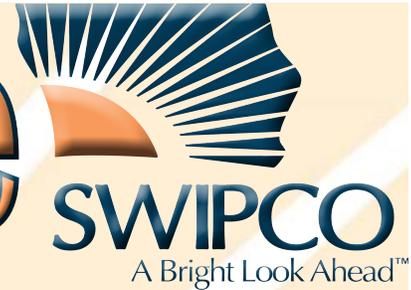


The Update



June 2023

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

Wiota Steakhouse Updated in Time for Wiota’s Sesquicentennial Celebration

The city of Wiota received a grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA) in June 2022 under the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Covid Façade program with assistance from Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO). This grant was to revitalize the Wiota Steakhouse and Lounge and construction is nearing completion this month.

The CDBG award was for \$300,000 in construction costs and administration and the owner contributed \$95,433 of their own funding for architect and construction costs. These funds were able to repair the facades on the North, West, and South sides of the existing structure.

“I am excited to see this project getting so close to completion,” said Brenda Williams, owner of Wiota Steakhouse and Lounge. “We are celebrating Wiota’s Sesquicentennial this June and our city park is getting new playground equipment so the town will be looking its best just in time for the celebration.” The playground also benefited from grant writing assistance from SWIPCO. SWIPCO assisted the City of Wiota with securing the Rural Revitalization Grant for \$20,000 to help purchase the new playground equipment in Wiota.



The focus of CDBG Covid Façade programs is to eliminate “slum and blight” in communities by completing important building façade repairs and storefront improvements while respecting historic character. To participate, a property owner must contribute a minimum of 10% of the construction cost, commit to the program throughout the grant period, sign related documents, make timely payments, and follow all related grant requirements.

“A facelift to the exterior of the building was previously planned by the owners for summer 2020 but

the financial repercussions from Covid-19 delayed this plan. The delay of this project caused further problems for the exterior of the building,” stated Tammy DeBord, Grants Specialist III with SWIPCO. “This grant allowed the building to be restored so that it can remain a source of pride for the residents and this business that draws people to Wiota.”

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.

In this Issue

Twelve Homes Rehabilitated with help from IWF.....	2
SWITA Receives 2023 System of the Year Award.....	3-4
SWITA Celebrates June as Ride Transit Month.....	5
June Birthdays & Anniversaries.....	5
SWITA by the Numbers.....	5
SWIPCO is Hiring.....	6
Upcoming Grant Information.....	6
From the Desk of the Executive Director.....	6

Twelve Homes Rehabilitated by SWIPCO with Help from Iowa West Foundation



Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF), a nonprofit fund administered by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO), recently completed the rehabilitation of twelve homes in the southwest Iowa region with a \$100,000 grant from Iowa West Foundation awarded in March 2022.

The homes with Iowa West funds were in the cities of Harlan (4 homes), Atlantic (3 homes), Henderson, Clarinda, Shenandoah, Elliott, and Griswold. The total rehabilitation cost for the twelve homes was \$203,394 and the Iowa West Foundation funds leveraged \$103,394 of other grants from the Iowa Finance Authority and the United States Department of Agriculture. Types of repairs included replacement windows and doors, roof repairs, upgraded insulation, foundation repair, and health hazard abatement. In total over the last year SWIPCO has rehabilitated 48 homes across multiple programs.

“I am super appreciative of the grant that was used to be able to get the work done on my house.

I love my house,” stated Whitney Vanderpool, a homeowner assisted in Atlantic. “It has been helpful to have a fourth bedroom in the basement with an egress window. There is no longer any leaking in my basement as the wall was fixed so there is no longer water in my basement. It was a huge blessing to have that fixed as well as the sewer, as the basement can now be fixed up, if necessary for another area of living space. It is wonderful and such a blessing to us that such a program was out there to assist us as it did.”

All twelve homes met income eligibility requirements to qualify. Seven of the homes are owned by disabled individuals, five of the homes are owned by elderly individuals, and one home included children under the age of six living in the residence.

“Rehabilitation is a great way for low to moderate income homeowners to not only improve the health, safety, and energy efficiency of their dwellings, but to build value in their existing homes,” said Erin Hudson, SWIPCO Community Development Director.

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The Iowa West Foundation is committed to make southwest Iowa a place where families love to live. It has distributed more than \$500 million to nonprofits and governmental agencies through southwest Iowa and eastern Nebraska since the inception of its grant program. Funding for the grants comes from investment earnings and the Iowa West Racing Association, which receives contractual fees from casino operators, Ameristar, and Harrah's. IWRA is the license sponsor for Ameristar and Harrah's and the license holder for Horseshoe-Bluffs Run. The Foundation targets resources into programs and projects that focus on housing, financial stability, educational opportunities, belonging and well-being.

SWITA Receives the 2023 Iowa DOT's Regional Transit System of the Year Award



Left to Right: Amy Colwell, Jamie Wingert, Emma Simmons, Kristen Templeton (Transit Coordinator w/ SWITA), Mark Lander (Transit Director w/ SWITA), Tamara Nicholson (Iowa DOT Director Modal Transportation Bureau), Rebecca Law and Kristin Haar (Public Transit Director)

“The Iowa DOT was pleased to honor SWITA with the 2023 Regional Transit System of the Year award at last week’s Iowa Public Transit Association meeting,” stated Kristin Haar, Public Transit Director with the Iowa DOT. **“Using FY2022 statistics and equally weighting a combination of rides per person in the region, percentage increase in ridership from 2021 to 2022, and rides per dollar of operating expense, SWITA took the top spot among the 16 regional transit agencies in the state. Congratulations to SWITA!”**

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA), Southwest Iowa’s public transportation system serving all residents in Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Mills, Montgomery, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby counties, received the Iowa Department of Transportation’s 2023 Regional Transit System of the Year award.

SWITA has shown growth whereas other transit agencies across the state have seen declining ridership. SWITA is projected to provide over 515,000 rides for FY23, which is a significant increase from 305,932 rides in FY20, 377,547 rides in FY21, and 480,229 rides in FY22. We have also seen our in-town routes and taxi rides almost doubling what they were in FY15. FY22 SWITA taxi rides were 42,836 and we are projected to provide over 55,000 taxi rides for FY23. Workforce ridership is one specific area of growth for SWITA, and ridership nearly doubled from fiscal year 2020 at 43,363 rides to fiscal year 2022 at 85,131 rides.

SWITA Awards (Continued)

Also presented at last week's Iowa Public Transit Association meeting was the Operations Person of the Year award which was awarded to SWITA Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton. Kristen was given this well-deserved award based on the impact she has made on the agency with her willingness to learn, go getter attitude, and her friendly demeanor. Kristen currently oversees six transit office staff and around 75 transit drivers. Kristen is also responsible for keeping track of a fleet of approximately 110 vehicles. The position of Transit Coordinator requires Kristen to be one of the first calls when weekend and off-hour issues arise. Kristen does the majority of the scheduling for the agency, which is no easy feat. It would be near impossible to provide the large number of rides annually here at SWITA without Kristen's attention to detail, ability to match the right drivers with the right routes, and ability to juggle and adjust on the fly when things go wrong, which happens very quickly. Kristen has played an integral role in the growth of the agency and the number of rides we pro-



Left to Right: Carl Lingen, Kristen Templeton, Transit Coordinator w/ SWITA; Mark Lander, Transit Director w/ SWITA



Left to Right: Kristen Templeton, Transit Coordinator; Dean Driskell, Driver of the Year; Mark Lander, Transit Director

vide yearly. SWITA's growth has made her job considerably more difficult but she has risen to the challenge and excelled in her role. When Kristen started, SWITA only had one true 24/7 service but now we operate five. This is only one example of the growth we have seen here at SWITA since Kristen started. Throughout it all, Kristen has continued to be a valuable part of our SWITA team. She keeps a positive and friendly attitude every day and works day in and day out to get the people of SW Iowa where they need to go.

Iowa Public Transit Association also held the annual Driver of the Year awards dinner during the annual meeting last week which was a great opportunity to recognize the hard work and dedication of transit drivers across the state. SWITA's 2023 Driver of the Year, Dean Driskell, was recognized for his award at the dinner.

SWITA would not be able to operate as efficiently and as safely as it does now without the hard work and dedication of all the SWITA transit staff and drivers. To learn more about the services provided by SWITA, visit SWITA.com or call 712-243-2518.

SWITA Celebrates June as Ride Transit Month



Mayor Grace Garrett (left); Bob Brown (left); Mayor Steve Herrington (right); Ron Kohn (right)

Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA) and local governments in southwest Iowa are recognizing June as Ride Transit Month. June is National Ride Transit Month and a great time for southwest Iowa residents to take advantage of the benefits of public transit!

June has been declared Ride Transit Month by mayors in the cities of Atlantic, Glenwood, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Red Oak, and Shenandoah. SWITA thanks these local governments for recognizing the important role transit plays in making our communities more connected and accessible to everyone. Whether you ride a bus, bike, or carpool, or you are headed to work, school, the grocery store, or anywhere in between, transit can get us there together. In honor of Ride Transit Month, all taxi fares in Atlantic, Glenwood, Harlan, Missouri Valley, Red Oak, and Shenandoah were waived on June 21, 2023.



Dwayne Hemminger (left); Mayor Jay Christensen (right)



Mayor Shawn Kelly (left); Barb Smithson (right)



Dean Driskell (left); Mayor Roger McQueen (right)

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Kersten Abild
Transit Scheduler II
Birthday Month June



Matthew Lee
Building Inspector II
4 Years of Service



Rhonda Brown
Finance Manager
6 Years of Service



SWITA by the Numbers

	April 2023	YTD
Total Miles	177,071	1,674,391
Total Hours	9,762	96,784
Total Rides	47,449	445,563

Per Service April 2023		April Rides Breakdown	
Workforce Rides	7,729	Disabled	24,733
Taxi Rides	4,808	Elderly	2,945
Student Rides	6,729	Other General Public	19,771

From the Desk of the Executive Director...

John McCurdy
Executive Director

I drive through Wiota at least twice a day on my way back and forth to the office. My kids belong to the Benton-Franklin 4-H club which meets at the Wiota community center. Wiota is tiny. According to the census the population is 91—when everyone is home. But, even though small it's a great example of how local effort and state and federal programs can work together to make a major impact. Brenda had a vision and invested a significant amount of money into the Wiota Steakhouse and working with SWIPCO was able to leverage the funds available for Covid recovery. Bars and restaurants were of course hit hard by the pandemic, so it's wonderful to see the funds that the federal government set aside to help recover make sure a visual impact in a town like Wiota. Volunteers, especially young moms, pushed hard to get playground equipment and the State of Iowa's Rural Revitalization Grant was a great fit. Likewise, the City had acquired a couple dilapidated properties and worked with SWIPCO to secure housing trust fund dollars to pay for half of the demolition costs. Just a couple of years ago the City also partnered with SWIPCO to secure CDBG grant funds and USDA monies to dig a new well and accompanying infrastructure. Even though small, there is a growing community spirit in Wiota and this will be on display for the community's 150th anniversary celebration this weekend. Our goal at SWIPCO is to see all of Southwest Iowa—large and tiny—take full advantage of the resources available to them and we look forward to working with Wiota—and with your town on the next project!

P.S. How about SWITA winning all those awards! We in Southwest Iowa are also lucky to have the best public transit system and transit PEOPLE in the state. Fun fact—SWITA's rides amount to 4 rides per person per year in our region, which is an incredible stat for a rural system.

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

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