

# BATA WHEEL news

*Brookings Area Transit Authority*



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## The MISSION...

To provide coordinated transportation services for all citizens of the Brookings area and foster independence by providing mobility options.



**SPRING 2020**

# BRENDA *Schweitzer*

*A Note from the Director*

Hometown: Lemmon, SD

Kids: 3 sons, Garrett (Robyn), Grant (Lindsey), Gaven

Grandkids: Hadley, Jensen, Maddux, Adalyn, and Hudson

*“For twenty years I have had the opportunity to make a difference in communities and lives through working with public transportation.”*

My work in transit began after serving on the Board of Directors for *Arrow Transit* in Lemmon, SD. In 2000, I was hired for the Director position. I was ready for a change after working 19 years as an insurance agent/CSR with Dacotah Bank. My insurance background has served me well in my business and personal life.

In 2005, life changes prompted me to explore an open Director position with *Brookings Area Transit Authority (BATA)*. When I reflect back on the decision to make this change, I now see what an incredible step forward it was while leaving everything I knew behind. It was an exciting change, as I could see the growth and service opportunities for public transit.

In 2005, we had 4 drivers (1 full-time) and 4 vehicles. We had two back up vehicles, two part-time dispatchers and a Director. There was opportunity for growth! Today we have 32 drivers, 3 managers, 2 office staff, 3 full time dispatchers, and a director. I feel most proud of the staff we've cultivated and the expansion of service provided to the Brookings County area. For twenty years I have had the opportunity to make a difference in communities and lives through working with public transportation.



## BROOKINGS AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY, INC.

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Kas Williams**

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*Director*

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**Paul Briseno**

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**Mike Mullaney**

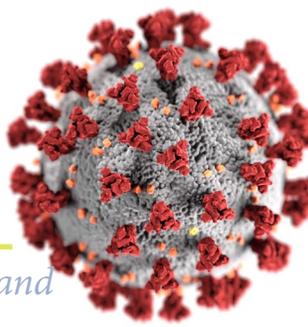
*Ex-Officio Director*

**Brenda Schweitzer**

*Ex-Officio Director*

*Monthly board meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of the month – Noon Mission Coffee House*

# BATA's COVID-19 Response



*Our priorities are to keep our staff and our passengers protected and safe. Measures are in place to do exactly this.*

As with the rest of the world, our local transit world has been drastically impacted by this unforeseen pandemic. We have implemented all the planning our resources have provided for us over the years, yet there are lessons, mandates, regulations and limitations that must be respected and filtered into our plan.

We appreciate the years of guidance that we've had by attending the **Pandemic Preparedness and Coordination Committee (PPCC)** meetings. At BATA we've also implemented protocol from our industry, such as the **Federal Transit Administration (FTA)**, **Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA)**, our peers, the guidance of our Board of Directors, and our staff.

Public transportation is considered 'Essential Services'. Currently our focused transportation is for essential needs. This has included rides for employment, medical appointments and essential shopping. Ridership is down from approximately 750 rides during our peak time to an average of 110 rides per day currently. In an effort to make sure we are at full throttle when the world is able to ease into full action mode, the **CARES Act** has allowed transit to continue to employ transit staff at their regular schedule. This unprecedented funding is validation by the FTA of the importance and the role of transportation in our communities. We are front-line workers, not only during a pandemic, but every day. Having the words to fully express our gratitude to our team seems minimal. We are proud and humbled.

## Track**STATS**

### BATA's RIDERSHIP

**142,019 Rides Performed in 2019**

Disabled - 18,387

Diabled, Non-Ambulatory - 3,795

Elderly - 22,655

Elderly Non-Ambulatory - 3,915

General Public - 46,251

Youth - 47,016

### WHERE IS EVERYONE GOING?

Education - 39,476

Employment - 32,888

Medical - 15,055

Recreation - 45,336

Shopping - 6,477

### WHAT ABOUT THE VEHICLES IN 2019?

Total Fuel Bill - \$137,125.82

Total Vehicle Maintenance Bill - \$52,692.60

Total Miles Travelled - 546,763

## HOW DOES BATA operate?

**We are a private nonprofit public transportation system.**

- The Federal Transit Authority (FTA) appropriates funding to the South Dakota Department of Transportation.
- Through a grant application process, we describe our system's goals, needs, and budget through a grant application with the SD DOT
- The SD DOT processes and appropriates federal funding from this application process.

After FTA funding is allowed at 40%, we must secure local money. to meet the difference. This comes from LOCAL MATCH which includes:

- Fares
- Contracts (Including Medicaid)
- State (minimal)
- County
- City
- United Way
- Donations
- Advertising

**Without the LOCAL MATCH, we would not exist.**

## Did You Know?

BATA provides free rides to Harvest Table, Feeding Brookings, Feeding South Dakota, and the Food Pantry. BATA is also a Medicaid transportation provider.



# COMMUNITY connections

*We all have a hand in building up our community.*

By Brianna Doran

Our neighborhoods are filled with hand-raisers, game-changers, and problem-solvers. In Brookings County, we are fighting for a brighter tomorrow and know that equal access to health, education, and financial stability is crucial.

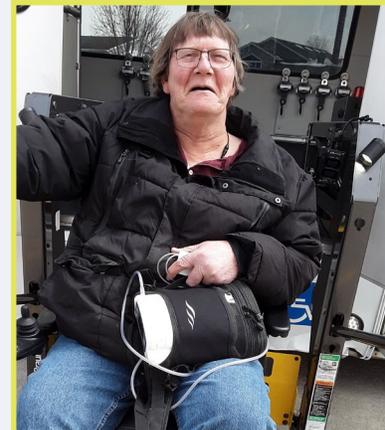
**Brookings Area United Way** leads this fight with dozens of Community Partners such as BATA. They are founded on the principles of uniting people, sharing resources, inspiring hope and enriching lives for a stronger Brookings County. BATA is a critical connection in making sure that brighter tomorrow is created for our communities through the strong support of *United Way*.



BATA is directly connected in building the strength of our communities. When someone has access to transportation, they have the opportunity to get to work, visit family, go grocery shopping, have their kids get to school, and visit community resources. The relationship between transportation and social mobility is paramount; when transit is available with low-economic barriers, a community is more connected, safer, and expanded. Because BATA provides door-to-door service, BATA also allows individuals with disabilities to be independent, visit

friends and family, and have access to job opportunities or activities.

The social and economic well-being of Brookings County is impacted directly by agencies such as BATA. BATA and *United Way* have created BATA's relationships with other nonprofits leverage community resources to significantly impact Brookings County.



## Different Rhythms

We live in a society that values adulthood, and in turn doing – productivity and ongoing activity. The young and the old share a different rhythm. It's one that focuses on the power of being. The young and the old are most closely connected with the essence of living. They can exist in a moment that's the grand sum of past, present, and future. Precious moments like these are shared regularly at BATA.

*Photo: Marlow Ohman and Kai Ness*



# BATA Partners with Freeman

By Carol J. Eisenbeis



You won't hear the radio playing when you ride along with **Anna Munkvold**, lead driver for *Freeman Community Transit*. And it's not because she prefers silence. She likes to hear from the people she transports back and forth for appointments, shopping trips, and more.

In her role as Freeman Community Transit's Lead Driver, Munkvold is joined by three part-time drivers – **Shirley Deckert, Bonnie Hofer, Candace Schrag, and Linda Sorensen**.

In addition to driving, Munkvold is responsible for scheduling, record-keeping, and washing and detailing the fleet of vehicles. She's prompt, patient, and courteous; making sure everyone not only has a safe ride, but gets in and out of the vehicle with care.

Maintaining independence is a factor that significantly impacts quality of life; especially as people age. *Freeman Community Transit* has played a vital role in helping area residents maintain independence. While transit services are available to people of all ages, most of Freeman's riders happen to be senior citizens.

Transit trips have people from surrounding towns coming to Freeman for medical, dental, and eye appointments. They also enjoy coming to Freeman to shop at a variety of stores. The transit service makes routine trips to Yankton and Sioux Falls for medical services like dialysis and chemotherapy. Local churches and other organizations have contracted *Freeman Community Transit* to provide transportation to worship services as well as a variety of special events.

Partnering with *Brookings Area Transit Authority* has allowed for the residents of the Freeman community to enjoy the privilege of safe and dependable transportation at a reasonable cost.

## Fast Facts

*About Freeman, SD*

**Population: 1,306**

- Located Along U.S. Hwy 81 in Hutchinson County
- Home of Schmeckfest & the SD Chislic Festival
- Regional Hospital
- Medical, Dental, Vision, Chiropractic, & Veterinary Clinics
- Elder Care Facilities & Senior Center
- Two K-12 Schools
- Industry & Ag Services
- Heritage Hall Museum & Archives
- 40-Acre Prairie Arboretum & City Parks
- 9-Hole Golf Course
- Seasonal Swimming Pool
- Public Library on Main Street
- Weekly Newspaper: circulation 1,500

Grocery Stores, Convenience Stores, Pharmacies, Greenhouses, Restaurants & Bars, Banks, Floral & Gift Shops, Farmer's Market, Thrift Store, & Other Retail

## FreemanTrackSTATS

**2019**

Rides Performed - 6,714

Miles Travelled - 57,546

**2015-Present**

Total Rides Performed - 31,257

Total Miles Travelled - 277,326

**Carol J. Eisenbeis** After a long career as an educator with the Sioux Falls School District, Carol assumed the full-time role as Development & Marketing Coordinator for the City of Freeman last year.



# Employee Profile

# JAY Caylor

Mobility Manager

## What are your responsibilities at BATA?

I oversee dispatch, work with Freeman Transit, manage Medicaid submissions, coordinate SafeRide, drive when needed, and anything else that needs my help.

## How long have you been with BATA?

Fourteen Years.

## What is your career/education background?

History Education, PE, Coaching (SDSU Graduate)

## Family?

Nichole (happily married for twenty-three years this summer), daughter Makenzie, sons Caden and Brycen

## Did you know?

I taught high school for eleven years prior to working for BATA.

## What are the current challenges for BATA?

Building consistent growth with the SDSU population and recovering ridership that is down from the current health situation.

## What do you like most about BATA?

The family atmosphere and being able to help passengers whether it's behind the scenes or on the front lines every day.



## BATA Management Team

Bottom L to R: Brenda Schweitzer, Mike Mullaney  
Top L to R: Jay Caylor, Travis Bortnem

# THE HISTORY OF BATA

The history of public transportation for the community of Brookings begins in April of **1982** when the *Brookings Transportation Committee for the Elderly and Handicapped* was organized as a volunteer service group. When this group reached the point of working with the state, they felt it was necessary to seek some assistance. At that time, they asked *Inter-Lakes Community Action Program (ICAP)* to become involved by assisting them through the grants process and eventually administering and operating a transit program. Transportation service included 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM six days a week, and 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM Sundays. A second vehicle was added to the fleet in **1987**.

Transportation service was also available to residents of area communities one day per week. Local coordination was done with the nursing home facilities, *ADVANCE*, and the *Brookings Public School* system. They were the only public vehicles that were accessible to accommodate wheelchairs. An average of **1,600** elderly and handicapped individuals were transported on a monthly basis.

Through increased ridership and transportation needs, project manager, **VaDonna Julian**, made the decision to break away from *ICAP* to allow the *Brookings County Transportation for the Elderly and Disabled* to be a stand-alone agency in **1990**. The name was changed to **Brookings Area Transit Authority, Inc. (BATA)**. Transportation was expanded to all, without limit to age or ability.

Today, ridership numbers average **145,000** per year and they continue to increase. BATA's staff includes 17 full-time employees and 23 part-time. The development of community and governmental relationships with Brookings and the surrounding communities has fostered increased coordination with nursing homes, assisted living communities, *United Way*, *ADVANCE*, youth programs, *South Dakota State University*, *Chamber of Commerce*, health care providers, employers, families, etc. Most of the maintenance and all fuel purchases are made locally.





# What is it like to be a *BATA Driver?*

by Mike Mullaney

BATA drivers serve our community in a unique capacity. It is important to BATA to have the right people to handle all the dynamics that are thrown at them daily.

There are a wide variety of people our drivers deal with every day. A driver might start their day picking up an exhausted, but happy young mother with a newborn and driving them to the clinic for their first checkup. The next passenger may be a hesitant 3-year-old child leaving daycare for their first day of pre-school. The next group may be all 4-year-olds going home from preschool and asking if the word "fart" is a swear word and if they can get kicked off the bus for saying that. The next passenger may be an elderly woman who is leaving her apartment for the first time in a week. She has been excited and is thankful the driver is on time. On this trip, the driver will hear of her and her neighbor's medical history. The day continues with new encounters by the hour. Each day and each encounter with passengers is unique.

The things we cannot teach a driver is to have a compassionate spirit to care for people; the ability to treat others with kindness, patience, positive energy, and understanding.

*BATA provides continuous training and support for our drivers for safety and regulations required to be a licensed Transit Driver. BATA trains drivers to obtain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), Passenger Endorsements, wheelchair securement training, Defensive Driving Certification, and Passenger Service and Safety Driver Certification Program (PASS).*

BATA continuously cleans and details our fleet and facilities. We care about the well-being of those we serve. Photos Left: Driver Brad Erickson Top: Driver Dan Eclow

# BATA *Bus Advertising*

Looking to drive your business while we drive the bus? Want to support an essential non-profit agency that benefits your local community at the same time?

Transit advertising is considerably less expensive than other advertising venues. Prices range from \$75 to \$500/month, depending on your choices.

Your ad will be seen where people live, work, and shop. It will provide a market penetration that cannot be touched by traditional media.

BATA's vehicles travel an average of 545,000 miles and transport an average of 145,000 passengers each year.

Your business will be displayed on a traveling billboard with a radius of 50+ miles of the Brookings area.

To inquire about putting advertising to work for you, contact Jenny at:

**605-692-5416**

or go to our website:

[www.brookingsareatransit.com](http://www.brookingsareatransit.com)



## Did You Know?

Bus tokens may be purchased at our office during the hours of 7:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Mon. - Fri. Tokens can also be purchased at: all First Bank and Trust locations, Dakotaland Federal Credit Union, Bankstar locations, Volga City Hall, or from any BATA driver. Token prices are \$3 each with \$5 tokens also available.



# Get BATA Educated!

- Pre-schedule your rides at least a day ahead of time.
- Same-Day rides will be referred to the taxi service.
- Fares - Local pre-scheduled rides are \$3 each way. Out-of-town fares vary.
- Scheduling - Give BATA 30 mins to get you to your destination.
- No-Shows - If you will miss your bus or no longer need your bus, please call us.

## OUR ADVERTISERS

*Bankstar Financial*  
*Body Illustrations*  
*Brookings Health Systems*  
*Brookings Hearing Associates*  
*Candy's Garden*  
*Century 21*  
*Dakotaland Design*  
*Integrity Accounting*  
*Kari Westlund*  
*Lucky Dog*  
*Mills Property Management*  
*Nail City*  
*Option 1*  
*Perry Electric*  
*Pro PT*  
*Rental Depot*  
*Farmers Insurance*  
*Snap Fitness*  
*State Farm Insurance*  
*Healthsource Chiropractic*  
*VFW*  
*W.W. Tire*

## DONATIONS

Brookings Area Transit Authority, Inc., is a non-profit organization. All donations are appreciated and can be made in person, by mail, over the phone, or on our website. Your support through donations, memorials, estate planning, etc. are humbly appreciated and accepted.

## BATA NOTICE OF PUBLIC RIGHTS

Brookings Area Transit Authority, Inc. services without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age or disability, according to the provisions in SDCL20-13, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994.

Any person who has questions concerning this policy or who believes he or she has been discriminated against should contact the Director at 605-692-5416.

*Public Transportation is a core part of a community's infrastructure. It plays a vital part in economic development. BATA understands the significance that public transit plays in this plan, keeping a pro-active strategy in mind.*

## Who can use BATA?

*BATA is a local 501(c)(3) which offers transportation services to citizens of Brookings county. Weekday services to Sioux Falls are available as well as Medicaid transportation for Medicaid recipients. **Anyone can use BATA services!***

## CONTACT INFO:

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**418 Western Avenue**  
**Brookings, SD 57006**

**Office phone: 605-692-5416**  
**Dispatch phone: 605-692-2222**

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