

# BATA

Rolling since 1990

# Wheel News

Brookings Area Transit Authority



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**Dog Days of Summer**  
**Youth BUS PASSES available!**  
 Info and Purchase:  
**BataBus.com**  
**605-692-2222**



**SUMMER 2021**

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

*A Note from the Director*

# BRENDA *Schweitzer*

**Recovering Ridership, Changing Demographics,  
Generosity Fund, Economic Development**



*“Welcome to BATA’s third edition of Wheel News. This has been a fun and exciting project aimed at sharing important information about our services, regulations, limitations, and opportunities.”*

*While Covid is still our reality and a safety focus for us, BATA is grateful for the support of the CARES Act, which helped us prepare for a full return to service when our communities were ready. We are there! Ridership numbers have recovered in a way that we didn’t expect. Ridership demographics are unique in every community. For BATA, this pandemic has changed our dynamics, with an increase in the youth numbers and slower return of those age 60 and older. What hasn’t changed is the service. We are here, stronger and better than ever. Your safety, great customer service, and the ability to get to your destinations are our focus. The cleaning protocols will remain, along with the FTA’s mask mandate, through September. The plan to resume evening service is on the table for this fall.*

*There are always silver linings to challenging situations. Collaboration and coordination are elements that are not only required of our program, but simply come instinctively. We have continually worked with all organizations to provide them with the wheels to enhance the success of their programs. The number of youths struggling to find transportation to and/or from school is a issue that these wonderful organizations are working to solve. TOGETHER we have collaborated to build and deploy the **Transportation Generosity Fund**. Through your generosity (**Day of Giving**), various grants and donations, we have joined forces and resources to help in resolving this crisis. Through referrals, qualification for this program is determined by the leaders of many programs, churches, and individuals who support this fund.*

*We have been a member of the **PPCC** (Pandemic Preparedness Community Committee) and the **LEPC** (Local Emergency Preparedness Committee) for 15 years. Both organizations work for the safety and health of our community. Seeing the years of planning come into action through the PODs (Point of Distribution) for COVID-19 vaccine distribution has been incredible. Free rides have been provided to anyone needing transportation to get their vaccination, and BATA employees have volunteered to work at the POD.*

*Spring is the time when we are responsible for working with our federal, state, and local funders. As a private nonprofit receiving federal transit funding, we must match these federal dollars with local support. The most difficult part of my job is asking for money, yet this is also a humbling way to educate our civic leaders, community members, and donors of the role public transportation plays in each community. Aside from the obvious convenience and mobility we offer our passengers, BATA also helps to stimulate the local economy by providing transportation to and from the workplace, local shops, medical facilities, and more. We have 40 employees, and our fleet is maintained and fueled locally. We are economic development with the privilege of providing an amazing transportation service!*

By Phyl Naffziger



*"I consider BATA the 'silent partner' on my health care team."*

## BATA, Phyl Naffziger's Silent Partner

I recently had total knee replacement surgery. This was actually the second such surgery, and, both times, I have relied on BATA to transport me from my home to my physical therapy appointments.

Although I needed this surgery to decrease pain and increase mobility, among the deciding factors to have the surgery was knowing I could use BATA for a ride to these sessions. Until I heal enough to bend my knee, the lifts on all the BATA buses are a big bonus. Additionally, BATA not only gives me the control and independence in scheduling the ride, but it also eliminates the need to inconvenience family and friends.

I can count on all my interactions with BATA to be friendly, timely and professional from the first call to the BATA scheduling staff, through the drivers who pick me up at my home in Volga and then take me home afterward. I know the members of the BATA family are dedicated to providing the highest quality of service.

I believe BATA is a crucial community asset, and I support BATA through the Annual *United Way* Campaign.



Photos: Phyl Naffziger boards a BATA bus to get to her medical appointment. Her service dog "Tux" helps with the healing time.

## HOW DOES BATA operate?

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

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

After FTA funding is allotted, we must secure local money to meet the difference. This comes from LOCAL MATCH (approximately 60%) which includes:

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

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

## Ridership Increase & Changing Demographics

Passenger Category	Oct. 2020	Nov. 2020	Dec. 2020	Jan. 2021	Feb. 2021	Mar. 2021
Disabled Ambulatory	1,589*	841	645	890	1,155	1,523
Disabled Non-Ambulatory	201	40	54	77	57	116
Elderly Ambulatory	1,371	1,160	1,429	1,281	1,566	1,513
Elderly Non-Ambulatory	217	218	217	252	347	414
Public	2,978	2,230	1,247	2,544	4,944	2,430
Youth	4,268	3,422	3,013	4,317	4,970	5,395
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,624</b>	<b>7,911</b>	<b>6,605</b>	<b>9,361</b>	<b>13,039</b>	<b>11,391</b>

\* Number of rides

Track**STATS**

# COMMUNITY connections

We all have a hand in building up our community.

## United Way IMPACTING Our Community

### Self-Sufficiency, Health, Education

BATA works closely with the *United Way* by providing transportation for their programs throughout the community. Together, we unite people, foster independence, share resources, inspire others, and enrich lives. *United Way* joins forces with over 200 Funded and Community Partners in Brookings County. Programs BATA directly impacts include:

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| ADVANCE                          | Brookings Behavioral Health              |
| Boys & Girls Club of Brookings   | Feeding Brookings                        |
| Brookings Activity Center        | Feeding South Dakota                     |
| Brookings Backpack Project       | Great After-School Place (GAP)           |
| Brookings County Food Pantry     | Harvest Table                            |
| Brookings Domestic Abuse Shelter | Independent Living Choices               |
| Brookings Empowerment Project    | Inter-Lakes Community Action Partnership |
| Brookings Interagency Council    | Lutheran Social Services                 |
| Brookings Habitat for Humanity   | Teen Challenge of the Dakotas            |
| Delta Dental Mobile Program      |  |

**BrookingsUnitedWay.org**

## Sponsors & Advertisers

Sponsors and Advertisers help keep the wheels going 'round. 100% of your dollars go directly to BATA's needs. Want to become a Sponsor or Advertiser of BATA? You can stop by the BATA office and get set up in person, over the phone, or online. BATA is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

### BATA

418 Western Avenue  
Brookings, SD 57006

**605-692-2222**

**BataBus.com**

Thank you **Lori Egeberg** for supporting your community through BATA. Lori, owner of **6th Street Optical** in Brookings, SD, is our newest sponsor and advertiser with BATA.

Call **6th Street Optical:**  
**(605) 692-5600**



## 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? Your advertisement on a BATA bus is a statement that you're a supportive part of the community. Join our current advertisers today!

- |                                    |                          |                            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Bank Star Financial                | Century 21- Dave Roberts | Pro PT                     |
| Best Choice Realty- Kelly Odegaard | Century 21- Nick Dieter  | Rental Depot               |
| Body Illustrations                 | Dakotaland Design        | Snap Fitness               |
| Brookings Empowerment Project      | Green Energy Solutions   | State Farm- Adam Holtquist |
| Brookings Health Systems           | Kari Westlund            | Healthsource Chiropractic  |
| Brookings Hearing Associates       | King Insurance           | VRS P.C.                   |
| Candy's Garden                     | Lucky Dog                | VFW                        |
|                                    | Nail City                | W.W. Tire                  |
|                                    | Option 1                 |                            |
|                                    | Perry Electric           |                            |

To inquire about putting advertising to work for you, contact BATA at:  
**605-692-5416**  
or go to our website:  
**BataBus.com**



# Staff Profile Amber Blanchette

By Kristine Madsen

*"I'm grateful to have had BATA when I needed it (as a passenger) and to, now, be a part of the BATA family." - Amber Blanchette*



**Amber Blanchette** is a Brookings native, born and raised. Amber graduated high school in Brookings and attended South Dakota State University and Minnesota West Community & Technical College at the Pipestone, MN campus.

After earning a degree in Cosmetology, Amber worked in that industry for several years, eventually opening her own salon.

Amber returned to her hometown of Brookings to be closer to family and to start fresh with a new chapter in her professional life. She worked in a factory setting while waiting for an opportunity for a career change.

BATA came into her life when she developed a health condition that temporarily limited her ability to drive. Amber used BATA services to get to work and run errands. She learned from one of the drivers that BATA was hiring for a dispatcher position. The driver thought she would be a great fit for the position and encouraged her to apply. Now, Amber has been a dispatcher with BATA for almost three years. She recently added to her responsibilities at BATA by accepting a customer service position.

### What is your favorite part of your job at BATA?

"I love interacting with and helping people, including my co-workers. We've become a really good team. And, it makes me proud to know that BATA makes a difference in peoples' lives - like my grandmother, who wouldn't be as independent without BATA. It's really rewarding to be a part of something that's so important for so many people."

### What are some of the challenges at BATA?

"Gaining the passengers' trust when I was a new employee. It took people time to get used to me answering their calls and helping them. Learning programs that I'm not familiar with is always challenging. Plus, sometimes it just gets incredibly busy."

### What is something unique or unusual about you?

"When I was four years-old, I was on KSFY! I kept seeing myself on their commercials. I'm also surprisingly good at recognizing accents on TV." [Laughs]



### 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.

## 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!***

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS BROOKINGS AREA TRANSIT AUTHORITY, INC.

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*Monthly board meetings are held on the 4th Wednesday of the month at the Mission Coffee House and Zoom*

# DRIVER Profile TERRY McKeown



By Kristine Madsen

- 2008 - Joined BATA
- 2010 - SD DTA Driver of the Year Award
- 2015 - SD DTA Above & Beyond Award

## Award-Winning Driver

The first impression **Terry McKeown** made on the Director at BATA in 2005 was a memorable one. He was working for the *South Dakota Department of Labor* and joined a meeting with the transportation service in town, BATA, wearing a big tall blonde curly hair-do. Terry does not recall the meeting, but BATA remembered Terry. In 2008, Terry retired from his career and was hired to be a part-time BATA driver. Terry is currently the longest driver employee, serving sixteen years, just a few months longer than long-time driver **Ron Klosterman**.

Terry has a special rapport connecting with others, and it shows in his work with passengers, especially BATA's youth riders. The youth passengers in the community look forward to riding the bus with "Mr. Terry" as he is popularly called. Everyone at BATA is also aware that he has the cleanest bus in the fleet. His standards, professionalism, and knowledge of regulations are high, yet he has a soft heart, compassionate aura, and doesn't take himself too seriously. Terry has all the natural dynamics of truly being one of BATA's most exceptional drivers.



# DELLS Xpress

## Creating Peace of Mind

By: Kathy Bitner, Registered Family Childcare Provider, Dell Rapids

As a Registered Family Childcare Provider, providing transportation has always presented challenges. Getting children to and from pre-school, kindergarten, swimming lessons, or other activities was a struggle. When DellsXpress became available to our community, it solved a lot of problems for parents and providers.

DellsXpress provides a dependable door-to-door transportation service in our community. Most weeks they make 12-16 stops at my daycare. They have gone above and beyond for the families that I serve. The drivers welcome each child into the bus, they make sure the children have their belongings with them, and wait to see the children make it into the house safely. When we have last-minute schedule changes, DellsXpress is always accommodating and courteous.

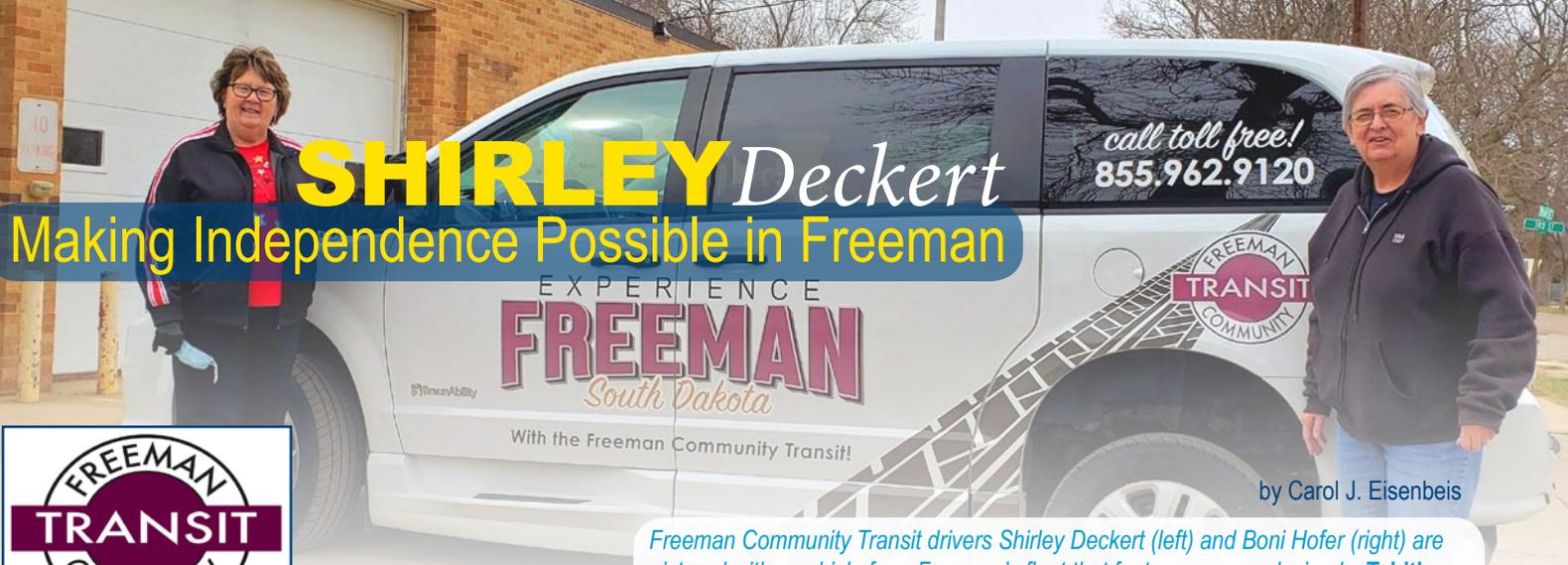


Having this service within our community not only makes my job easier but also gives peace of mind that our children are cared for and safe while they are being transported from place to place.

**For a DellsXpress ride call:  
866-962-9120  
or online: [BataBus.com](http://BataBus.com)**

# SHIRLEY Deckert

## Making Independence Possible in Freeman



by Carol J. Eisenbeis

Freeman Community Transit drivers Shirley Deckert (left) and Boni Hofer (right) are pictured with a vehicle from Freeman's fleet that features a wrap design by **Tabitha Schoenwald** of **Waltner Media** in Freeman. The printing and application was done by **Outlaw Graphics** of Brookings. Photo by Carol J. Eisenbeis



Driving - it's something **Shirley Deckert** has always loved doing. At just eleven years of age, Shirley began honing her driving skills by carefully practicing backing the car out of her family's driveway. Followed by some real practice, with her grandma at her side in the passenger's seat of an old Plymouth, her passion for driving was set in motion. Today, as one of three Freeman Community Transit (FCT) drivers, Shirley's love for driving pairs nicely with her sincere desire to serve others.

"Every day is new," she notes as she reflects on the variety that comes with the series of rides she's scheduled to provide. Flexibility is key. She has no trouble responding to a schedule that comes her way just the night before. "We have a good team," she adds, detailing the organizational skills that Freeman's local transit manager, **Anna Munkvold**, provides. Putting all of the different pieces together to effectively plan and coordinate the daily schedules, Anna maximizes efficiency as she thinks through routes and assigns rides to drivers. That skill certainly contributes to the quality of service that FCT is able to deliver to its patrons.

Getting to know the transit passengers is something that Shirley has valued. She delights in how pleased new riders are when they discover that this service is available to them and when they realize how much easier their life is because of it. And at just \$1.50 per ride to anywhere in Freeman, the transit certainly offers them a great value. Summer bus passes for youth passengers are just \$30 for unlimited rides all summer long. The FCT, BATA, and the Board of Directors work hard to keep the fares as low as possible, despite the significant operating costs.

Looking into the future, Shirley knows there will come a time when she'll need to give up driving. At that time, she'll be especially thankful for the opportunity to regularly utilize the local transit service to get to where she needs to go. Starting up a vehicle in cold weather? Scraping windshields? Maneuvering around traffic? No need to bother with any of that. FCT can do the driving for you. It's just so much safer for everyone. She confidently declares, "I'll be taking the transit."

Shirley says her kids often ask what she'd like for Christmas or for her birthday, and she usually has no recommendations. However, she does know what she'll be requesting when she gives up driving - transit tokens. She encourages others to give them as gifts to friends and family members too. They help to provide a level of independence, and they're also a great investment in safety.

*Carol J. Eisenbeis currently represents the Freeman community as a member of the Brookings Area Transit Authority's board of directors. Following a career as an educator, Eisenbeis is the full-time development and marketing coordinator for the City of Freeman.*

## How to get a Ride on Freeman Community Transit

Schedule a ride at least a day in advance before 5:00 p.m.

Call: (605) 692-2222 or toll free (855) 962-9120. Or go online: **BataBus.com**

Freeman Community Transit operates under the management of Brookings Area Transit Authority (BATA) in Brookings, SD. We are pleased to offer transportation services to anyone within the greater Hutchinson County Area. Our passengers schedule rides to work, school, the Sioux Falls Airport, medical appointments, Yankton trips as needed, and more!

Freeman Community Transit

# BATA Wheel News



**Brookings Area Transit Authority**  
 418 Western Avenue  
 Brookings, SD 57006  
 605-692-2222  
**BataBus.com**

## NEWSLETTER



## SUMMER 2021



[bata@Batabus.com](mailto:bata@Batabus.com)

[Batabus.com](http://Batabus.com)

Dispatch phone: 605-692-2222

Office phone: 605-692-5416

Brookings, SD 57006

418 Western Avenue

Brookings Area Transit Authority

**CONTACT INFO:**

BATA is a 501(c)(3) public transportation project funded through federal, state and local resources, under the guidance of the SD Dept. of Transportation. Public transportation is available to everyone within the areas served. These include Brookings, Dell Rapids and Freeman areas.

### Get BATA Educated!

**INFO: call: (605) 692-2222 or go online: Batabus.com**

- A detailed *Passenger Handbook* is available in print and on our website.
- Pre-schedule your rides at least a day ahead of time.
- Fares - Local pre-scheduled rides are \$3 each way. Out-of-town fares vary.
- Allow BATA 30 mins to get you to your destination.
- Pay for your ride by bus token, cash, check, or credit card.
- If you will miss your bus or no longer need your bus, please call us.

### 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.

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

# Wheel News



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