



THE WHEEL

Digital News Publication - January 2025



Local Match Helps Determine Service

Since 1971, OATS Transit has provided transportation for thousands of rural residents of all ages across the 87 counties we serve. Last year, we facilitated 910,120 trips. Since the pandemic began, we faced many challenges, but we continue to persevere in order to support those who rely on our service to meet their basic needs and maintain their independence while living in their own homes.

The lack of full local support oftentimes limits our ability to expand service, or increase the number of buses in the areas we serve. Local support includes city, county and state funding, as well as the agencies and individuals we contract with for service.

For our operating costs, we rely on grants from the Federal Transit Administration to cover 50% of our service, while we seek local support for the remaining 50%. For capital expenses such as buying new buses, 80% of the funding comes from federal grants, but we must obtain local resources for the remaining 20%. This means we require a local match of \$20,000 per vehicle before we can buy a new bus.

In simple terms, without local matching funds, we cannot extend our days and hours of service, nor can we acquire new vehicles. Many people depend on us for transportation to work, medical appointments, and grocery stores or food pantries. Safe and reliable transportation is crucial for those already living on fixed incomes, as most of our clients have no other means to get around. If individuals cannot reach their workplace, they cannot support their families. Additionally, businesses may suffer from a decline in customers if we are unable to transport people to community resources.



Local support from cities, counties, and agencies is essential to keep our buses running. We cannot rely on federal funding alone; in fact, a requirement of the federal grants is that there must be community buy-in. When local communities contribute financially, it leads to stronger community support and involvement in the service thereby increasing its potential for long-term stability.

Dare to be Different

As you enter the Rogersville (MO) Area Senior Center, you are welcomed by the delightful aroma of a delicious meal, the sound of soft laughter, and the call of “B4,” followed by the groans of the assembled Bingo players. Cathy Hancock quickly made her way to the front to greet me and led me to a back room for some privacy to conduct the interview. Despite being legally blind, Cathy navigated her way with impressive ease and confidence.

Cathy’s light blue hair, stylish outfit, and soft Southern charm make her someone you can’t help but smile at and want to know better. “I try to live life to the fullest,” Cathy says with a gentle lift in her voice. “It helps no one when you give up and don’t try new things or continue to experience old ones.”

Cathy and her husband moved from Florida to be closer to their daughter, Vickie, about six years ago. “After my husband passed, I found myself just sitting around the house,” Cathy recalls. “That didn’t suit me very well. I was fortunate to run into the administrator at the Senior Center, who told me that if I could get enough people to ride the OATS Bus from Marshfield, we could visit with the wonderful people here.”

Taking up the challenge, Cathy quickly gathered a full bus. Now, the group visits the Senior Center to enjoy food, games, and friendship. The riders have become like family. “We started dressing up for different occasions and would go to Walmart to do our shopping,” Cathy giggles. “The workers start following us around, taking pictures. Of

course, Halloween is our favorite time to dress up. Can you imagine an OATS Transit bus unloading a

group of witches who then wander through the Walmart aisles?”

Cathy is an advocate for speaking up for others and reaching out to those in need. “I love inviting people to learn about OATS Transit and encouraging them to ride the bus,” Cathy explains. “The cost to ride is much more affordable than other options, I don’t have to bother my daughter for rides, and our driver, Henry, is just the nicest person. I think we shock him sometimes, but he just laughs and tells us, ‘Don’t make me stop this bus,’ which makes us laugh even harder.”

Henry Johnson has been a driver for OATS Transit in the Southwest Region since 2023. Regional Director Rene Frazier praises him, saying, “Henry is just the nicest guy. He is always professional and strives to provide our riders with a safe, caring, and reliable ride to their medical and essential life appointments.”

Cathy’s goal in life is to make one person smile each day. “Years ago, my daughter kept giving me outfits that almost shocked me,” Cathy laughs. “I finally asked her why, and she said, ‘Mom, dare to be different.’ Well, I decided to do exactly that! Each day should be a surprise and a gift. So I dress how I want, act how I want, and do what I want. OATS Transit allows me to visit with others and stay active. Dare to be different and call OATS Transit to see how they can help you get out of the house and into the world.”

written by Rhonda Proctor



Cathy Hancock dares to be different daily and enjoys the freedom that OATS Transit provides to her.



Henry Johnson is a veteran and drives for OATS Transit’s Southwest Region, which is based in the Springfield, Missouri area.

BY THE NUMBERS



10,705,428
miles traveled

910,120
trips provided



568,481
operating hours



16,938
unique
riders



234
safe driver awards
1,838 cumulative years



780
In-Kind Ads
\$229,072 value

36%
trips were for
employment



8 REGIONAL OFFICES
East (Bridgeton), Mideast (Union), MidMO (Columbia),
Midwest (Sedalia), Northeast (Macon), Northwest (St.
Joseph), Southwest (Springfield) and West (Harrisonville).

87 counties in Missouri have
OATS Transit service.

575 employees statewide
473 Drivers / 102 Office Staff

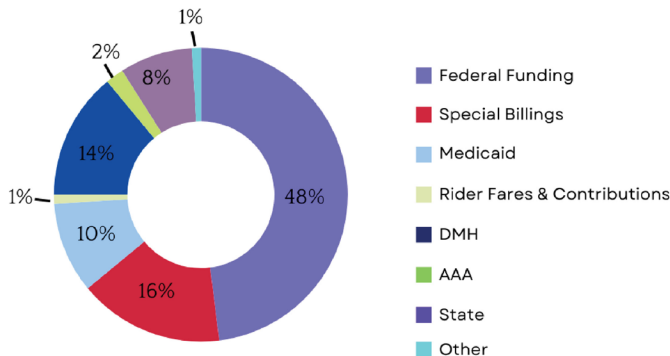
18%
of employees
are veterans



FUNDING & EXPENSES

Operating Budget: \$ 36.2 million

Where our funding comes from:



Where our funding goes:

Driver/dispatcher wages and benefits **59%**
Direct operating support **4%**
Gasoline **11%**
Indirect admin **14%**
Repairs and maintenance **6%**
Vehicle insurance **7%**

**Unaudited rounded percentages*

Board of Directors meetings are held six times a year at OATS Transit's home office in Columbia, MO. The Board of Directors provide policy direction, guidance, and fiduciary direction for the organization. The Board includes President Darlene Rapp, Vice-President Tammy Nadler, Secretary/Treasurer Jeff Leeman, and 12 other board members.



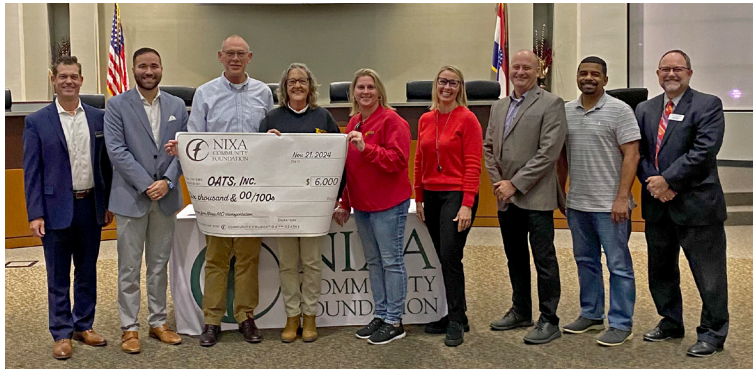
OATS Transit Holidays

OATS Transit offices will be closed, and regular routes do not run on the following holidays for 2025. We do publish this information on our social media platforms and on our website.

- New Year's Day - Wed., January 1, 2025
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Mon., January 20, 2025
- President's Day - Mon., February 17, 2025
- Memorial Day - Mon., May 26, 2025
- Juneteenth - Thur., June 19, 2025
- Independence Day - Fri., July 4, 2025
- Labor Day - Mon., Sept 1, 2025

- Columbus/Indigenous Peoples' Day - Mon., October 13, 2025
- Veterans Day - Tues., November 11, 2025
- Thanksgiving Day - Thur., November 27, 2025
- Day after Thanksgiving - Fri., November 28, 2025
- Christmas Eve - Wed., December 24, 2025
- Christmas Day - Thur., December 25, 2025

Recent Events.....



Southwest Operations Managers Lisa Bailey & Naomi Garner (center) were on hand for the grant presentation with the Nixa Community Foundation. OATS Transit was awarded \$6,000 for service in Nixa/Christian County to support rural general public transportation. The funds will be used toward the purchase of a new vehicle for the area. The check was presented by members of the Foundation Board.



OATS Transit received a grant from the Boonville Community Foundation Legacy Fund for \$2,500 for transit service in Boonville & Cooper County. Jill Stedem (second from left) was on hand for the event representing OATS.



Mike Altemueller (right) represented OATS Transit at the Lebanon Area Foundation event last month. OATS Transit was awarded with \$4,500 to provide service to Laclede County residents.



WE'RE HIRING DRIVERS

We have over 20 driver openings around the state of Missouri. Flexible schedules available and an excellent benefits package. Check out our openings online at: oatstransit.org/jobs

Please contact the editor if you have news stories or photos you would like to share with us. We would love to hear from you.

Jill Stedem, Editor

Email: jstedem@oatstransit.org

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linkedin.com/company/oatstransit
youtube.com/@OATSTransit

Bus schedules and fare information can be found at:
www.oatstransit.org/schedules

