



Access, Independence and Dignity: The Family Impact of Disability Transportation Services

Reliable and accessible transit services play a critical role not only in the lives of individuals with disabilities, but also in the well-being of their families. For many families, transportation is the bridge that connects their loved one to education, employment, healthcare and community participation. It's a sense of independence that builds confidence and life skills, while reducing over-dependence on family members.

Driver Anthony Scanavino sees the positive impact we have on the families we serve every day. "It is great to work with riders who need a little extra help, which is why I signed up for this job" said Anthony. He added, "The families give a lot of input to ensure their loved ones are taken care of properly. By providing transportation, families have more time to devote to other tasks all while knowing their family member is in good hands."

The true value of transit is best understood through the voices of those who rely on it. One rider's mom explains how our service has affected her family's life. Marsha Stewart's son Dallas rides OATS Transit each week to go from Mexico MO to Centralia MO to Impact Support Services. Through this program Dallas participates in skill-building activities, social engagement with others and community integration. Having OATS Transit transport Dallas to this program gives Marsha peace of mind.



Driver Anthony Scanavino



Dallas rides the OATS Transit bus to Impact Support Services

Using the OATS bus allows Dallas to travel independently, reducing the need for his mom to provide transportation. "Honestly this provides me some financial relief," said Marsha. It's a 30-minute drive one-way for her to take him there and back. Marsha admits life isn't easy, as she has two sons with disabilities that she is raising. "If I had to transport Dallas to the day program, that takes time away from my other son who also needs my attention. Dallas loves riding the bus and has a good relationship with his driver Anthony," added Marsha. He has been going to the day program for about 3 years now and has been riding with OATS Transit for about 8 months of that. Marsha expressed her appreciation, saying, "OATS Transit is truly a wonderful service that I can't live without." OATS Transit is more than just a ride — it's about being attentive to the needs of families and riders with disabilities.

Jeanie Byland loves that OATS Transit is so easy to work with when it comes to meeting the needs of her family. Her daughter Sarah works at Columbia College and depends on OATS Transit to get to work three days each week. Sarah has worked in food service at the college for 21 years. "I know I can depend on OATS Transit to be responsive and on-time, so I don't have to worry about Sarah being late for work," said Jeanie. "The drivers make Sarah feel so comfortable, and they treat her nicely, which gives me peace of mind" she added. Admittedly, Jeanie said they have used other service providers in the past that were not dependable and made Sarah frequently late for work. One of the key factors in choosing OATS Transit was that our drivers understand working with individuals with intellectual and physical disabilities. Jeanie values her daughter's independence, and she feels reassured knowing she's well cared for by OATS Transit. When we asked Sarah who her favorite driver was, she said "I like them all!" with a huge smile.

Public transportation is more than just a way to get from one place to another- it's a bridge to independence, opportunity and peace of mind. When systems are safe, reliable and compassionate, families can feel confident knowing their loved ones are supported every step of the journey. Public transit plays a vital role in easing the daily burdens families may face. Investing in accessible, dependable transit is ultimately an investment in families and communities alike.



Sarah rides the OATS Transit bus to work at Columbia College



Our new look.....

We are excited to introduce our refreshed logo which we have been gradually unveiling over the last few months. With cleaner lines and a modern twist, it reflects our forward momentum while still honoring our history to serve Missouri.

The new logo was introduced to the Board in September 2025, and they overwhelming agreed that it was time for a modern touch. Consulting with the two graphic design companies we use, they assure us many organizations refresh their branding every 7-10 years to stay relevant with the times. The last change to our logo was in 2017, when we changed the black to blue, plus added the word "Transit" to our logo.

This refresh goes beyond a visual update. The redesign brings clarity, flexibility and a contemporary feel that works seamlessly across all platforms. We don't plan to retrofit all our vehicles due to the expense, but rather as we get new buses in, they will have the new logo. Modernizing our logo ensures it reflects who we are today, not what we were decades ago. Our first round of buses with the new logo should hit the roads the first part of February.

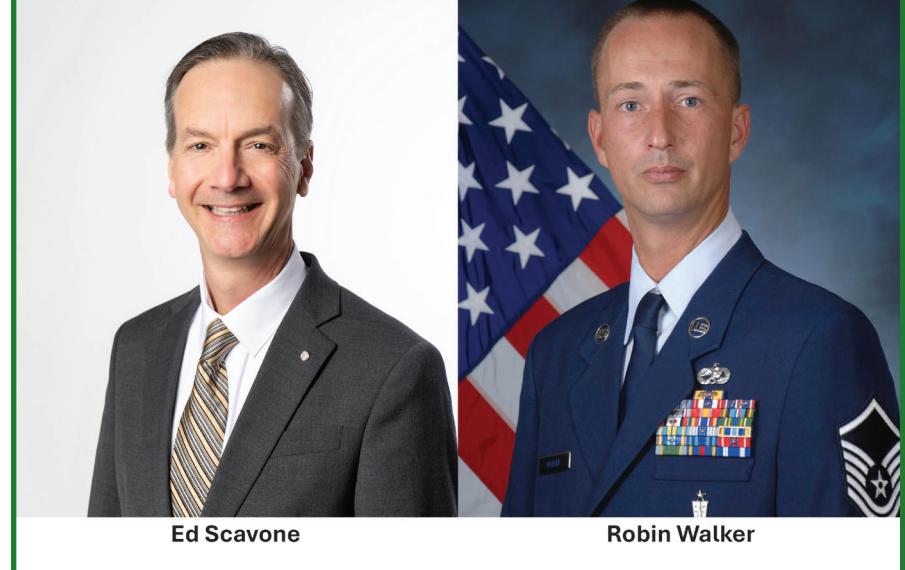


Two New Board Members Join OATS Transit

Two new members were appointed to the OATS Transit Board of Directors, with terms beginning January 2026. Mr. Ed Scavone and Mr. Robin Walker will join 12 other members who make up the statewide Board of Directors.

Ed Scavone of Columbia MO is the President and CEO of Central Bank of Boone County. He has been with the Bank for more than three decades and was named President in 2020. Ed is very active with many community organizations including the State Historical Society of Missouri, Scouting America - Great Rivers Council, Missouri Flagship Council, ESS Foundation and serves on the Columbia College Presidents Advisory Council. Ed holds a Bachelor of Science from Chapman University in accounting and business administration. He served in the US Navy for eight years, including a deployment during Desert Storm.

Robin Walker of Springfield MO is the plant manager of SWI Industrial Solutions in Monett where he has been since 2014. SWI is a workshop that provides meaningful employment to individuals with disabilities providing services for businesses in the community. In addition to their Monett facility, SWI also has sites in Marshfield and Springfield MO. Robin oversees facility management in Monett, plus works with the Lawrence County Senate Bill 40 board and agencies like OATS Transit to ensure the needs of their consumers are met. Robin served in the US Air Force from 2000 to 2014, with two overseas stints in Afghanistan and Guam. He graduated with a BA from the American Military University in Virginia and received numerous awards and honors during his 14-year military career. He is also active with the Scott Regional Technology Center and volunteers with various little league programs in Springfield.



Ed Scavone

Robin Walker



OATS Transit staff will be joining the Missouri Public Transit Association and transit providers from across the state in Jefferson City for Transit Tuesdays during the 2026 Legislative Session. Transportation is the key to moving Missouri forward! There is an opportunity in the 2026 Legislative Session to underscore the importance of public transit, especially in light of the cuts to funding in 2025, a 42-percent reduction in state transit assistance.

For Missourians willing to contact their legislator to show your support for transit, visit the state website to find their contact information. All you need to do is enter your address and your representatives will be listed. <https://www.senate.mo.gov/legislookup>

Tell them:

- you use OATS Transit;
- your transportation story;
- why public transportation is important to you & other Missourians.

If you need help writing your story, please let us know and we will assist you. Your voice matters!

Tell us something good on Facebook.....

Cathy

I just wanted to thank everyone with OATS in Benton County Missouri.

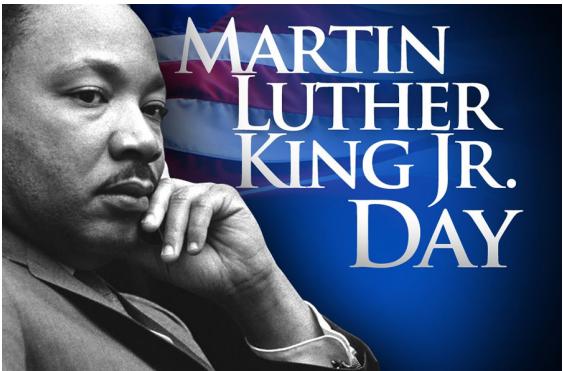
The office staff always try to be as informed and accommodating as possible. I don't remember all their names, but Sandra and Pete and the rest of the staff are always so kind to me and always answer my questions.

I don't know about other OATS locations, but our drivers are just the best. Again, I don't know all their names, but John and Layton are two of the best for certain.

Because of my health I had to stop driving around 3 years ago. It wasn't easy, but the OATS bus has been the biggest blessing. I don't go out very often, but I know I'll be picked up on time and that the drivers do their best to get everyone back home as soon as possible.

So, thank you all for getting me where I need to go and back home safely. You really are a blessing to me.

I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season.



Our offices will be closed, and regular routes not running, on **January 19, 2026** to honor Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

THE WHEEL

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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 and use them in our next newsletter.

Social Media Sites:



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youtube.com/@OATSTransit

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

WINTER WEATHER ALERT

This is a reminder on our inclement weather policy for riders to know if service in your community is affected by snow/ice during the winter.

- Listen to your local radio station for OATS Transit cancellations in your area.
- The best way to stay up to date about your upcoming trips is to sign up for the OATS Transit app, which will show cancellations as soon as they are known. The app is available to individuals who pre-schedule their trips.
- As a general rule of thumb, if public schools are closed in your area, OATS Transit service will also be cancelled.

