

## Investing in Our Future: The Crucial Role of State and Federal Partnerships in Transit

At OATS Transit, our mission has always been to serve Missouri with safe, reliable and courteous transportation. Fulfilling our mission takes partnerships with state, federal, local and private entities. No one resource can support the services we provide in 87 counties – it takes everyone coming together. In recent weeks, we've been discussing the future of state and federal funding with lawmakers, both in Missouri and Washington DC, highlighting why sustaining investment in programs like ours is not just a line item in a budget – it is an investment in Missouri.



### Transit Priorities for Federal Government

- Federal funds allow us to maintain crucial infrastructure, such as replacing older vehicles in our fleet and providing basic services in rural counties. These funds provide a baseline of security, ensuring that services remain accessible to those in need, regardless of economic fluctuations.
- As Congress begins the process of reauthorizing the transportation funding bill, it is important they have a clear picture of the value Federal Transit Administration funding programs bring to Missouri.
- Without these programs, many rural counties that lack local funding will lose transportation options.

### Transit Priorities for State Government

- In his budget recommendations for FY27, Governor Kehoe has cut an additional \$5 million for public transit assistance.
- This comes after reducing state transit funding by 42% last year and will leave only \$1.7 million to be divided among 30 transit providers.
- This funding is used by OATS Transit to match federal funds. Last year, state funding provided 18% of the match needed; this year it reduced to 10%. If the additional budget cut holds, it will provide only 3% meaning riders and local partners will have to contribute more to meet the match.
- According to the MO Public Transit Association, if the Governor's proposed budget is adopted, Missouri's per capita spending on transit will drop from \$1.08 to just 27 cents.

## STATE: Jefferson City



On February 24<sup>th</sup> OATS Transit staff visited the state capitol in Jefferson City to talk with legislators about protecting transit funding. Pictured left to right: Tracy Walkup, Dorothy Yeager, Kristi Rodden, Pam Knox, Cabrina Davidson, Michael Burbank and Jill Stedem.



Accompanied by their OATS Transit driver Rodney Stokes, individuals from CC Links in Christian County MO visited with their legislators in Jefferson City. Their focus was on services for individuals with developmental disabilities, including employment and transportation.



Tracy Walkup and Dorothy Yeager visited with Representative Tim Taylor who both live in his district. Representative Taylor covers Randolph, Howard, Cooper & Charlton Counties in district 48.

## FEDERAL: Washington DC



On March 5<sup>th</sup> OATS Transit staff were in Washington DC for the Legislative Fly-In event hosted by the Community Transportation Association of America (CTAA). Pictured above are Dorothy Yeager with OATS Transit, David Engel with CTAA, Daniel Smith with Southeast MO Transportation Service, Mason Greenwald with Congressman Jason Smith's office, and Jill Stedem with OATS Transit.



OATS Transit Executive Director Dorothy Yeager talks with Legislative Assistant Jordan Blackwell from Congresswoman Ann Wagner office, presenting the Missouri second district.



Daniel Smith with SMTS, and Jill Stedem & Dorothy Yeager with OATS Transit, represented Missouri's rural transit systems to visit with Max Seltzer from Senator Eric Schmitt's office.

# What our riders have to say.....

I use the OATS bus in Warrensburg, Mo to get supplemental groceries I can't get otherwise. If not for the Old Drum bus I would be forced to do without things.

Kenneth S. - Warrensburg MO Rider

oats and paratransit made it possible for my wife to work and have a much better life-thanks

Robert- Spouse of OATS Rider

I wanted to let them know how much we appreciate and need their services

Elaine T.- Parent of Sullivan MO Rider

I've been riding with oats for 32 years and they have done an excellent job getting me from work to home if it wasn't for them I wouldn't be able to work

Danny P.- Rushville MO Rider

If you don't drive it is the best way to get around

Dwayne H.- Warrensburg MO Resident

“ Reliable public transit is not a luxury; it is an essential service that drives our local economy and connects our community. As a rider, my son depends on OATS Transit to get to his day programs, shopping, and medical appointments. Without adequate state funding, he risks service cuts, reduced frequency, and increased fares, which will disproportionately affect people like him who rely on this service. ”

Malinda R.- Parent of Union MO Rider

## THE WHEEL

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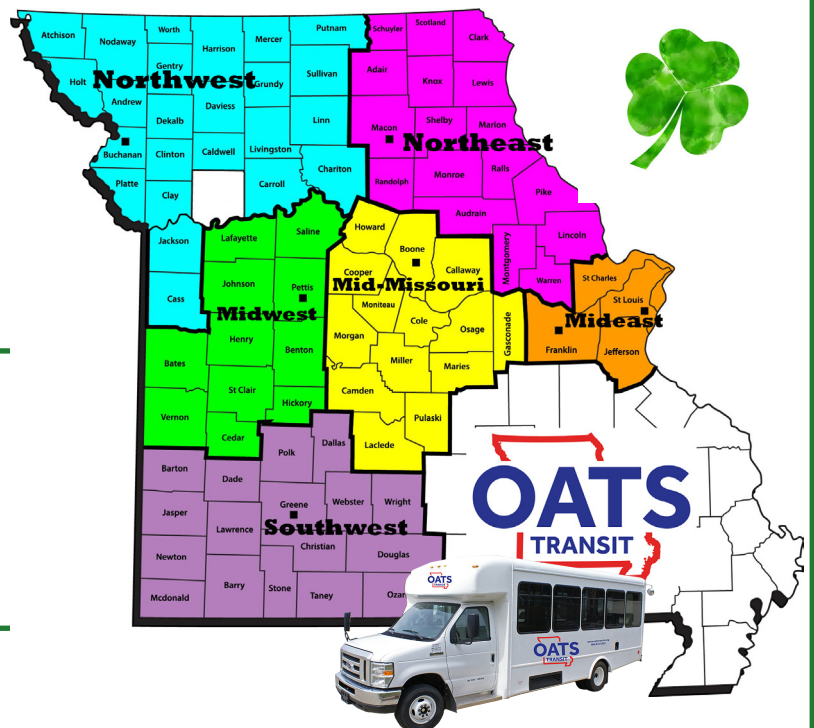
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