

Timeless Travelers Still in Motion

A growing number of seniors are defying expectations by continuing to use public transit as a vital part of their lives. Whether its to run errands, attend social gatherings, or maintain their independence, these centenarian riders we honor, challenge assumptions about aging and mobility. Their presence on the bus is not only a testament to personal resilience, but also highlights the importance of accessible, age-friendly transportation systems that support dignity and autonomy in later life.

Originally established in 1971, our mission was to serve seniors by providing them with opportunities to stay active and engaged in the community. In the early 1980's, our service expanded to include rural residents of any age. However, we have never forgotten our roots in senior transportation and continue to proudly serve many older adults to this day. While our service has grown and evolved over the years, some of our most remarkable riders continue to be the seniors who inspired our original mission. Among them are individuals who have reached- and even surpassed- the incredible milestone of 100 years old, continuing to use public transit as a lifeline to independence and connection.

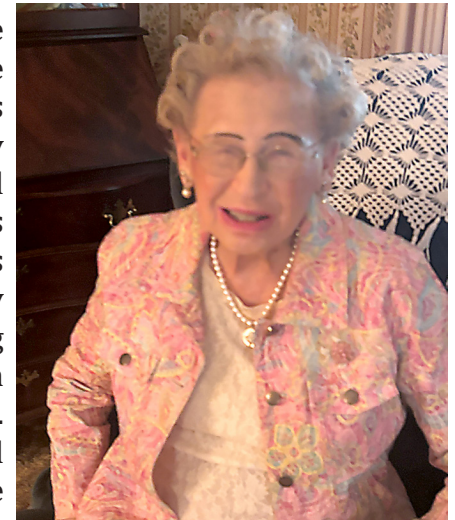
One centenarian rider, for example, relies on our bus each week to get to her regular hair appointments- a simple routine that brings her joy and sense of normalcy.

Bettie Langford
 from Dekalb



County Missouri certainly doesn't let her age stop her from getting out and about in the community. She is an incredible 101 years old. Bettie uses OATS Transit frequently even to run business errands or go shopping. "I ride the OATS bus because it's so convenient and the drivers are so helpful and kind. I have been riding for more than 15 years and truly enjoy it," said Bettie. When asked what advice she would give the younger generations, she had four words of advice- "Always do what's right!"

Betty Bender will be turning a remarkable 100 years old this Fall! She lives in Clay County Missouri and hops on the bus like it's no big deal. Betty rides OATS Transit routinely to go on shopping excursions and run business errands. She sold her car and stopped driving five years ago, so she is dependent on OATS Transit to keep her connected to the community. She loves just being able to go shopping with easy access to OATS Transit. Betty said her advice to the younger generation is the just keep trying, and appreciate the things you have- never give up! She has lived in Smithville since she was just a toddler, and was even named the hometown queen when she was younger, so her roots run deep in the community she loves!



Vivian Ellerman of Cedar County Missouri rides the bus to the local senior center, where she has lunch, shares stories and enjoys the company of others- a tradition that keeps her connected and her spirits high. She is a remarkable 98 years young! Vivian says she rides OATS



because she can't drive any longer and has no other way to get to places she wants to go. In addition to going to the Senior Center, Vivian uses the bus to go shopping. She started riding the OATS bus in 2000 after the death of her husband. Vivian has this advice to

share with others "Be kind to everyone, especially the OATS Drivers!"

Myrtle Spencer

is 98 years old and also resides in Cedar County Missouri. She uses the OATS bus to go to the beauty shop, shopping, or to go to medical appointments. She has used OATS since about 1995 when she sold her car. Myrtle offered some



very smart advice for all of us "Take care of your body, eat right, stay active and purposeful through work and going to Church."



Also at age 98 is **Joan Daviess** from Andrew County Missouri. The OATS bus allows her the opportunity to get to medical appointments or an occasional shopping trip. Joan rides the bus because she doesn't drive any longer. "It's the only way to get to my appointments

and the drivers are great! I have been riding for about 20 years. My advice to the younger generation is try to stay healthy and have a good outlook on life. Try not to get upset about the small stuff."

Jean Tuttle from Taney County Missouri is 98 years old and uses the bus to stay connected to her community.

Jean said when she was no longer able to drive, she'd heard about OATS and decided to try it. Now she has been riding OATS since 2015 and doesn't know what she would do without the bus. "OATS is a wonderful service, and I love every one of the drivers I have ridden with. I am



very grateful for the fact there is no charge for getting to and from the Senior Center, thanks to funding from my local Area Agency on Aging," said Jean. She said she has made many new friends on the bus, including her drivers. One of her former drivers even continues to stay connected to her and checks on her. One story she shared about a recent bus trip was a day it was very hot. The driver kept a small fan facing her, gave her a cold bottle of water, and made arrangements to get her home early. The driver made sure she got into her apartment safely and was very kind. Jean added, "All the drivers watch over me, maybe because I'm so old" she added with a chuckle. "I would be lost without the OATS bus. The people make all the difference!" Her advice to the younger generation- "Don't smoke or take drugs, and get all the education you can!"

As we celebrate the enduring spirit of all our riders across Missouri, we honor these six remarkable transit riders who continue to inspire us with their independence, resilience, and love for their community. From 101-year-old Bettie to all our other riders, these individuals embody a lifetime of stories in motion. Their continued presence on our transit system is a testament to the power of connection, community and the dignity of aging with freedom and grace- made possible by OATS Transit.

Now is the Time to Call or Email Your Elected Officials in Jefferson City!

Story and photo provided by the Missouri Public Transit Administration (MPTA)

The September veto session starts on September 10, 2025. This session includes the State of Missouri 2026 Budget, to provide an opportunity for Missouri Senators and Representatives to vote on the Governor's vetoes. As previously reported, this includes his decision this summer to cut state transit funding by 42%!

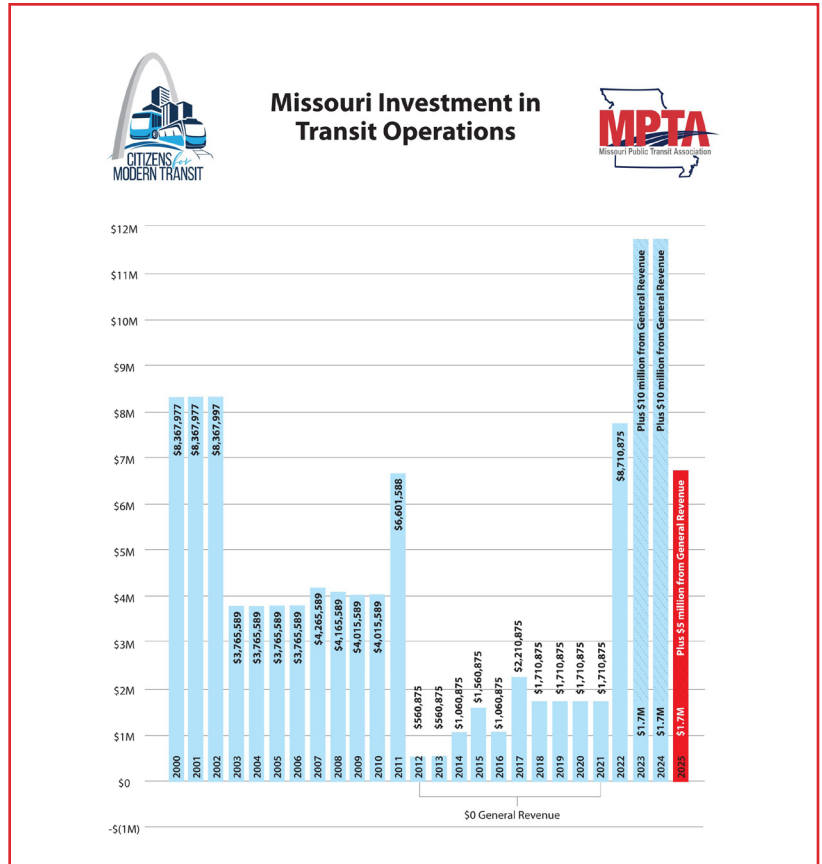
Whether you use transit yourself, or know people who do, now is the time to contact your elected officials. OATS Transit and all other public transportation agencies in the state of Missouri are impacted by these cuts. All 30 transit providers across Missouri rely on state investment, not only for day-to-day operations and capital improvements, but also to secure federal transit funds that require a non federal or local match.

The reduction in funding from \$11.7 million to \$6.7 million will result in fewer vehicle replacements, the inability to secure federal funds, reduced service hours, staffing cuts and millions of lost rides. This is particularly problematic for rural communities and vulnerable populations who depend on transit for essential services.

Transit delivers 37 million rides each year and yields an overall economic impact of \$4.05 billion annually. It matters! Missourians are urged to contact their state representatives and advocate for the restoration of transit funding.

If you don't know your Legislators, you can find them at this website: senate.mo.gov/legislookup

Kimberly Cella, executive director of the Missouri Public Transit Association and Citizens for Modern Transit



Visitors in Springfield

During a recent trip to Springfield as part of their summer program, a group from WC Partners in Marshfield Missouri stopped by our Springfield office. They wanted to see who made their transportation possible. Most often they only see their driver(s), but it takes a lot of hands behind the scenes to keep the buses rolling and running smoothly each day.

After their visit they headed off to The Johnny Morris' Wonders of Wildlife National Museum & Aquarium in Springfield. Thanks driver Randy (back row) for bringing them by the office!

Monika

THANK YOU ALL
FOR THE OATS
BUS TRANSPORTATION.

IT HELPS ME
A LOT WITH
GETTING MY
GROCERYS.

God BLESS
MONIKA

To all the drivers &
schedulers,

The difference you make in my world
is nothing less than magical.

Thank You So Much

Candie Unland

THE WHEEL

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.

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Social Media Sites:



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

Providing Support for New Buses & Rides.

OATS Transit is honored and deeply grateful to have received generous donations from Community Foundations and Trusts in recent months.

Boone County Community Trust

\$9,800 toward a new Boone County bus



Boone Electric Community Trust

\$10,000 toward a new Boone County bus



Jefferson Foundation

\$89,000 toward the purchase of new buses AND \$100,000 to provide rides to those in need in Jefferson County Missouri.



Anonymous Contributor

\$10,000 toward a new Pettis County bus

These contributions are vital in helping us continue our mission to keep Missourians connected to essential services and opportunities.

To find out how you can support public transportation in your local community, contact OATS Transit's Development staff at 573-443-4516, or email jstedem@oatstransit.org. Please help keep our buses on the road.