



The Wheel

News Publication - December 2025



Annual Message from The President & Executive Director

On behalf of the Board of Directors of OATS Transit, this annual message is presented as another fiscal year concludes. The collective wisdom, time, talent, and commitment over the past twelve months from the Board and staff members are greatly appreciated.

Key Highlights and Achievements:

- In FY2025, OATS Transit partnered with over 150 federal, state and local entities to provide 847,674 trips in 87 counties in Missouri.
- We completed a comprehensive job classification and compensation study to assure OATS Transit's wages and benefits are not only competitive, but also appropriate for a non-profit of our size and budget.
- We began installation of a real-time camera system on our fleet as part of OATS Transit's ongoing effort to focus on and improve the safety of our riders and drivers.

Financial Stewardship:

The financial position remains strong, demonstrating responsible stewardship of resources. OATS Transit received \$35,945,276 in operating revenue and directed 88% of expenditures to program services, ensuring maximum impact in the community. An additional \$4,497,099 in capital revenue was received.

Looking Ahead:

While successes are celebrated, the future is approached with a commitment to continuous growth and improvement. In the coming year, focus will be on state and local funding partnerships and exploring opportunities to improve service with more flexible routes and being responsive to customers' needs. Insights and expertise will be vital in navigating the next steps.

Of course, none of this would be possible without our drivers, staff, volunteers, donors, government and private funders. OATS Transit has proven itself to be a good partner, and that reputation helps us galvanize unwavering support to build on our 54-year mission to enhance the lives of Missourians by providing safe, caring & reliable transportation services.

Darleen Rapp
President, OATS, Inc.

Dorothy Yeager
Executive Director, OATS, Inc.

Rogersville is Named Missouri's Fastest-Growing Rural Community

Nestled along US Highway 60, just 19 miles southeast of Springfield, Rogersville, Missouri rests in the gentle quiet of the Ozarks. Its rapid growth is transforming the community's needs and the challenges it faces. But what actually created this rapid growth? Residents report they have moved to the area because it offers a combination of a small-town atmosphere, with the convenience of being close to the city of Springfield's shopping and dining options. Lower cost of living, more land and a relaxed pace of life were key factors mentioned by those who now call Rogersville home.

Although the population within the city limits is a modest 5,344, it represents a 37.7% increase in just four years' time. This made it the #1 fastest growing town in Missouri- faster than even Kansas City and other urban cities. However, this isn't the first time Rogersville has been noted as the fastest growing city, as its been even higher in previous census reports.

Rogersville was actually named after Dr. Isaac Newton Rogers in 1882 who agreed to fund the town if his name was used. It became an official village in 1916 and now spans both Greene & Webster counties. A fun fact about the town is that in 1950, it was dubbed the "Raccoon Capital of the World". The annual coon suppers were a long-standing tradition used to raise money for school programs. The town embraced this identity, and in the early days had a sign along the old highway welcoming visitors with this designation. While the original highway sign on what is now business 60 no longer stands, the raccoon mascot continues to be used to this day. In 2024 a local artist created Roger the Raccoon which has become part of a community scavenger hunt.

While the population surge presents challenges, it also creates opportunities such as levering increased population and economic activity to support future road improvements, expanding rural transit services, and long-term transportation planning to keep pace with community development.

For more than five decades OATS Transit has provided transportation to connect residents of Rogersville and the surrounding area to community resources. Daily service is offered to in-town residents, as well as weekly service to county residents. Because fares are modest and the system is open to anyone of any age or ability, OATS Transit helps ensure that rural residents aren't isolated and can remain active participants in their community.

Providing good dependable public transportation takes many faces at the table. The local funders who make Rogersville transportation service possible includes the Senior Tax Boards for both Webster and Greene Counties, SeniorAge Area Agency on Aging, and Webster County Partners Senate Bill 40 Board, along with individual donations. "Thanks to our local funding partners, Webster County consistently ranks in the Top 10 Counties for the most ridership in OATS Transit's service area" said Dorothy Yeager, OATS Transit Executive Director.

WC Partners is no exception when it comes to agencies affected by the increase in Rogersville's population. WC Partners is the Senate Bill 40 Board for Webster County, who administers local tax funds for developmental disabilities services in the county. "We have seen an uptick in the number of clients we serve in Rogersville, however the type of needs is very dependent on the age of those individuals," said Katrina Detherow, Executive Director of WC Partners. "OATS Transit provides a vital role in meeting the needs of our clients. By having access



photo credit: OzarksFirst Media

to public transportation, a number of those we serve can become employed, attend day programs, or go to medical appointments. They have a sense of pride, and the ability to be social with others, reducing isolation and decreasing health risks. WC Partners is proud to work with OATS Transit on meeting our client needs" added Katrina.

Local resident **Mary Clapper** has used OATS Transit for many years. "I'm visually impaired, so I don't drive, and therefore I depend on public transportation. OATS Transit is so important to our community! We have some riders who are in bad shape physically, but the Senior Center still makes meals for them. I remember a day one man couldn't leave his wife to ride the bus to the Senior

Center and back for their meals, so the OATS driver took it to the family. I thought that was so kind of him" said Mary Clapper.



One Rogersville resident added that while he didn't need OATS Transit services yet, it was great to know that when the time comes, he has OATS Transit to get him around town.

Henry Johnson has been driving for OATS Transit for nearly three years now. "It gratifies me knowing I am providing a service to those who need it in my community," said Henry. "I run mostly in Rogersville and Fordland to the Rogersville Senior Center, to Apple Market and the Dollar Store, for medical appointments, or trips into Marshfield for other needs" added Henry.

OATSTransitpartnerswith**SeniorAgeAreaAgencyonAgency**tofundtransportation for seniors. Co-CEO's Liz McClelland and Becca Fields had this to share: "OATS Transit has become increasingly important in Rogersville's continuance of senior

support services. As Rogersville's population of older adults and caregivers has grown, the need for reliable, assisted transportation has grown right along with it. Many seniors find it more affordable to live outside more urban areas, but that creates an even greater need for safe, dependable transportation to medical appointments, community agencies, and essential errands in Springfield and beyond. One of the concerns we hear most often from seniors is the fear of losing access to transportation. As they step back from driving, they face an unfamiliar level of vulnerability and dependence on community support. That vulnerability is magnified in communities that aren't densely populated, where each trip requires more planning, more coordination, and often more distance. This is where our long-standing partnership with OATS Transit has become so valuable."

Liz went on to add: "OATS Transit has earned deep trust among seniors in rural communities. They provide not only a dependable ride, but also a sense



Riders from WC Partners stopped by the Springfield office to see all the behind the scenes work that happens to make their transportation possible.



Pictured left to right: Driver Henry Johnson with riders Mary Clapper, Onna Stowers, Mary Pickett, Juanita Combs, Vance Crutchfield & Kathy Hancock.

of comfort and continuity. Supporting OATS Transit aligns with our priorities because they help close one of the most persistent service gaps facing older adults' - access to affordable, dependable transportation. Their long-established presence in rural and small-town Missouri complements our work and helps us expand our reach to seniors who might otherwise go without essential support. The rapid growth of Rogersville means our available resources must stretch to support a larger and more diverse population of older adults. It pushes us to be strategic, innovative, and ever mindful of efficiency. That is why we are especially grateful for OATS Transit and the way the organization continues to evolve its operations. Together, we can ensure that seniors remain connected, supported, and able to age with dignity in a community that is rapidly expanding around them".

In the end, investing in public transit isn't just about buses or routes- its about building the future that Rogersville deserves. As new families arrive, businesses expand, and opportunities grow, reliable transportation becomes the thread that keeps the community connected. Public transit isn't simply a convenience; it's a commitment to growth, resilience, and a thriving hometown for generations to come. So next time you are in the area, check out Rogersville and join the scavenger hunt to look for *Roger the Raccoon*!



A frequent stop for riders on the bus is the Apple Market, which is the only grocery store in Rogersville.

Top Growing Cities

Here's a look at some key cities and their growth rates from recent reports.

1. **Rogersville:** ~37.7% growth (2020-2024).
2. **North Kansas City:** ~26.09% growth (2020-2024).
3. **Parkville:** ~24.88% growth (2020-2024).
4. **Wright City:** ~19.08% growth (2020-2024).
5. **Troy:** ~17.98% growth (2020-2024).
6. **Lake St. Louis:** ~14.68% growth (2020-2024).
7. **Herculaneum:** ~13.75% growth (2020-2024).
8. **Eureka:** ~13.52% growth (2020-2024).
9. **Cottleville:** ~13.47% growth (2020-2024).
10. **Nixa:** ~13.27% growth (2020-2024).

Based on US Census Data

Ways to Support OATS Transit

- 1 Call us at 888-875-6287 and request to make a donation.
- 2 Visit oatstransit.org/donate and click on the donate button.
- 3 Host a fundraiser for OATS Transit.
- 4 Tell us about community grants or funding opportunities for us to apply.
- 5 Talk to your local city council, county commissioners, or state representatives about local funding for OATS Transit.
- 6 Leave a positive review on our Google Business page.
- 7 Engage positively with the organization through our social media posts. This raises awareness of our organization and services.
- 8 Email the organization a testimonial and photos that we can use to tell others about our services.
- 9 Start a Facebook fundraiser for the organization. This is free to you and declaring OATS Transit as the recipient of the fundraiser helps us provide services.
- 10 Follow us on our social media platforms and share our content to your personal page.



FISCAL YEAR 2025

OUR MISSION
*Enhancing quality of life by
providing safe, caring, and reliable
transportation services.*

BY THE NUMBERS

6

REGION OFFICES

Mideast (Bridgeton) - MidMO (Columbia)
Midwest (Sedalia) - Northeast (Macon)
Northwest (St. Joseph) - Southwest (Springfield)
Home office Columbia MO

87

counties out of 114 in
Missouri have OATS
Transit service.

847,674
trips provided

11,670,638
miles traveled

5 7 3
Service Vehicles

532,479
operating hours
of service

Top Requested Trip Purposes...

52%
of trips were
for employment

19%
of trips were
for medical/
dialysis

8%
of trips were
for shopping/
Food Pantry

Other trip request (in addition to above) includes senior centers, business, education, recreation & meal delivery.

15,400
unique riders

53% Seniors 60+
47% Under Age 59

49%
Riders w/ Disabilities

Age of Riders
0 to 102

533
Employees Statewide
433 Drivers
100 Office Staff

19.8%
of our employees
are Veterans

259
Safe Driver Awards
1,886 cumulative years

752
In-Kind Ads
\$211,839 value

FUNDING & EXPENSES

Operating Budget: \$35 million

Where our funding comes from:

Federal funding 56%
Special billings 16%
Department of Mental Health 12%
Medicaid 8%
Other 3%
Area Agencies on Aging 2%
State funding 2%
Rider fares and contributions 1%

Where our funding goes:

Driver/dispatcher wages & benefits 60%
Direct operating support 10%
Gasoline 9%
Vehicle insurance 10%
Repairs and maintenance 6%
Indirect admin. 5%

**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 2025 Board: President Darlene Rapp, Vice-President Tammy Nadler, Secretary/Treasurer Jeff Leeman, and 11 other board members.



To all Oats Bus drivers, and to all the office personal,

A great big "Thank You" for your friendliness, helpfulness, and Patience for all that you do for me as a rider on Oats Bus.

Sincerely,
Joyce.



Our offices will be closed, and regular routes not running, on the following upcomiong holidays:

- **Christmas Eve:** December 24, 2025
- **Christmas Day:** December 25, 2025
- **New Years Day:** January 1, 2026
- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day:** January 19, 2026

Enjoy the holiday season!

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.

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