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Missed the Last Issue?
Missed the last issue of the KAT Chronicle? Visit the County website to stay up to date on all the latest KAT news!

System Operator

FALL 2015 ISSUE
NEED A RIDE? DIAL: (877)IGO-4KAT (877)446-4528

Fall is Here!

KAT CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- **Monday October 12th**: In observance of Columbus Day, KAT will be closed.
- **Friday November 13th**: The Kendall County Legislative Forum, from 9:30 to noon at the Beecher Center in Yorkville.
- **Thursday and Friday November 26-27th**: In observance of Thanksgiving Holiday, KAT will be closed both days.
- **Thursday December 24th**: In observance of Christmas Eve, KAT will be closed.
- **Friday December 25th**: In observance of Christmas Day, KAT will be closed.
- **Friday January 1st**: In observance of the New Year, KAT will be closed.

Keep up to date on all other KAT events by “liking” the KAT Facebook
facebook.com/KendallAreaTransit

TRANSIT SPEAK

The Illinois Public Transportation Association is an organization in Illinois that is dedicated to achieving and maintaining the best transportation services possible. The IPTA advocates for the values of public transportation, represents the legislation, and provides a forum for the exchange of information, ideas, and experiences. They are critical in the transit community and continue to work hard to provide the best level of transportation care to the residents of Illinois.

Information for this description was found at the IPTA website
Letter from the Director

Tom Zucker, a Model Advocate for Public Transportation

~ Paul LaLonde, Interim Associate Director

In June of 2007, I began my internship with the City of DeKalb. I was working for the transportation division of community development. As I walked into the office on that first day, I was handed a giant pile of books, binders, and paper. My supervisor said “You’re going to be working closely with public transit, so read these materials and learn.” Needless to say, I was overwhelmed!

She then turned around but quickly went, “Oh yeah, and call Tom Zucker at VAC.” She wanted me to ask him a question about the scheduling software project.

I was a little shy so calling someone I never met and asking him a question about scheduling something-or-other made me nervous.

So, about a half hour later I picked up the phone and called VAC. The receptionist answered and I told her who I was – the new intern at DeKalb that started thirty-two minutes ago – and that I needed to talk to Tom Zucker. “Did you know him?” I asked.

I heard her laugh a little before putting me on hold. I then thought what if Tom was a jerk? What if he didn’t take interns seriously? That would really suck!

I heard the receiver pick up and a deep, gravely, yet strangely familiar voice said: “Hiyeah Pauly! How are you today!?"

My nervousness immediately turned to ease and I smiled.

That was the type of person Tom Zucker was. He had never met me, let alone heard my voice before, but he greeted me like a long lost friend.

I learned a lot at that internship, and I got the most out of it by spending time with Tom. Whenever he was around, I learned. I felt comfortable. At all the transportation meetings, he and I would joke back and forth. He would share stories about his time as a student at NIU protesting whatever it was they were mad about. He said it was something new every week. He would share stories about his years at VAC and how the transportation programs grew and changed.

Continued on Page 7
KAT faces potential shut down if State budget impasse continues

The following was written by Paul LaLonde, Interim Associate Director, as a Letter to the Editor at the Kendall County Chronicle on October 6th, 2015.

I am writing this letter as a supporter of community and public transportation, who is deeply concerned about the effects the State budget impasse is having on public transportation in Kendall County.

The fact is that the lack of a State budget is having dire consequences on those most needy in our community; and until a budget is passed, things will not get better for our neighbors—individuals the General Assembly and Governor’s office are supposed to be helping.

Thousands of Kendall County residents rely on Kendall Area Transit (KAT), the County’s only community and public transportation system. To continue operating KAT, we require funding from the State of Illinois Downstate Operating Assistance fund.

Last week we received our final State payment from the prior fiscal year. Since there is no budget in place, it is likely that this payment will be our last until such a time as when a budget is agreed upon by the General Assembly and the Governor.

Sources on a potential resolution timeframe vary, but some accounts suggest a budget may not be agreed upon until March 2016. There is currently a lawsuit filed by transit operators in an attempt to force the State to issue transit payments. Language in State statutes suggests that public transportation should not be held captive to the political whims of legislators and governors. We do not have a crystal ball, so where this lawsuit ends up is anyone’s guess.

In the meantime if we cannot expect further payments any time soon, then the State puts us in the position of limiting service over the coming weeks—culminating in the eventual partial or total shut down of KAT. Without KAT thousands in Kendall will lose their mobility, and these individuals’ personal quality of life—as well as the overall local economy—will suffer.

KAT provides nearly 28,000 dial-a-ride trips annually, and ridership continues to grow! Riders use KAT for many reasons, but most important are employment, medical appointments, education and job training, shopping, and nutrition. All these trips are made possible by State transit funding, again, which is currently shut off.

Socially, public transportation is a quality-of-life issue for many. It is not a luxury, but a necessity for some. Economically, studies show that every dollar invested in public transportation sees $4.00 to $9.00 in economic returns. This type of economic activity is something Illinois cannot afford to lose.

Funding public transportation programs is not a Republican or Democratic issue. It is a prosperity issue. I encourage all Kendall County residents to urge our representatives in Springfield to do everything in their power to assure that a budget is passed as soon as possible so that public transportation continues in Kendall County, as well as across the State. I ask our legislators at all levels to look at the negative impacts this situation is having in our communities. The inaction in Springfield is leading to real world consequences on those who can least afford it.
IMPORTANT: KAT FACING SERVICE REDUCTIONS

Please contact your state legislators and tell them how important Public Transportation is to YOU!

Due to the State of Illinois not passing a budget, community and public transit programs across Illinois will be facing serious service restrictions. KAT will be facing some difficult times ahead. We are encouraging all riders and their families to contact the governor and their state representatives to inform them of how important KAT is to your lives and why it needs the dedicated State funding immediately. Please contact KAT offices for more information or if you need help with identifying your state representatives.

For more information, please call
(877)-IGO-4KAT
(877) 446-4528
September 8, 2015 - Dispatcher Mike presents to Celebrate Difference in Oswego on KAT services.

September 19, 2015 - Rush Copley hosts its seventh annual Play it Safe Fair, a fun and interactive fair that teaches the community about various health topics relevant to all ages. Shari was at the booth to explain KAT services to the public!
Kendall County and Metra officials emerged from a 1½-hour meeting Tuesday morning in Oswego with a somewhat positive outlook. "It's wrong to be overly optimistic," said Martin Oberman, Metra board chairman, about extending Metra suburban rail service to Kendall County. "Metra is $11 billion behind in meeting its capital needs. What people need to understand is that operating a commuter rail line is expensive."

So what was the positive part?

"We're hopeful because we got some realistic conversation," said Gail Johnson, Oswego village president.

Realistic conversation is what Johnson was after when she pushed for the Tuesday meeting between Kendall County leaders and Metra officials. Leaders and staff members from Oswego, Yorkville, Plano, Sandwich and Kendall County were present, as were Oberman, Metra Chief Operating Officer Dan Orseno, and some of their staff.

Both sides said they came away with a resolve for better communication, and a more realistic look at how money earmarked for the study of extending Metra into Kendall can be spent. About $7 million was earmarked for the project back in the federal Transportation Bill of the mid-2000s. Only about $700,000 of it has been spent, and while that money was spent on engineering studies, both sides agreed the rest should not go toward engineering something that may never happen.

"We said let's stop engineering studies and do a different kind of feasibility study," Johnson said. That means both sides will develop a cost estimate in "hard cash," Johnson said, and will look at whether or not people will even use the service. For instance, if someone boarded the train in Sandwich, it might take them two hours to get to Chicago. Would people do that?

Staff members from the government groups and Metra also agreed to several more meetings, at least before the end of the year, Johnson said.

One thing both sides talked about differently was the question of whether or not Kendall County would have to join the Regional Transportation Authority to get Metra extended into the county.
I observed the way he interacted with people. He always had a smile on his face. He always spoke in a tone that was friendly. He never belittled people, or went out of his way to make others feel inferior. He wasn’t arrogant. He was always kind. And he always had a cigar and a story he was willing to share.

Tom was passionate about helping others. That’s why he was so passionate about community transportation – he understood it helped people. Tom loved life. Tom loved the Cubs (his one fault in this Cardinals fan’s estimation). But most of all he loved his family. He talked about them all the time.

You can tell the most about a person by the way others talk about them. I have never heard anyone say a genuinely mean or disparaging thing about Tom Zucker. And if someone somewhere has, they didn’t really know him.

I finished that internship two years later and was about to leave DeKalb and public transit, or so I thought, when Tom approached me about a project he was involved with in Kendall County. The County and VAC were in the final stages of bringing the first public transportation program to Kendall County. I was excited about the opportunity, but in a moment where I failed to sell myself, I asked Tom why he wanted me. Surely, someone more experience should head this project.

Tom said if he had wanted someone else, he’d have asked them.

That was Tom. He saw things in people, who didn’t necessarily see things in themselves. It reminds me of a quote by Mark Twain: “Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you too can become great.”

Tom Zucker was a great man. He will be missed by his community, by us at VAC, and by his family and friends. But he will not be quickly forgotten. Community and public transportation in Illinois owes Tom a debt.

On behalf of everyone at the VAC family, thank you to everyone for your generous support and kind well wishes. It has meant a lot to us, who spent the better part of two decades learning from Tom, enjoying his company, and sharing cigars, stories, and jokes.

With that, let me leave you with a quote from Kurt Vonnegut, one of Tom’s favorite authors. This quote is Tom Zucker.

“Hello babies. Welcome to Earth. It’s hot in the summer and cold in the winter. Its round and wet and crowded. On the outside, babies, you’ve got a hundred years here. There’s only one rule that I know of, babies – God d*** it, you’ve got to be kind.”

January 22, 2015 - Tom accepts the DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce’s Business of the Year Award, which was presented to Voluntary Action Center.
TRANSITIONS

“TRANSITIONS” highlights staff members who have recently been hired or changed positions.

KAT’s Happy Anniversaries!

Mark Couch
Bus Operator - 1 year, August 2014

Doug Fletcher
Bus Operator - 1 year, August 2014

Dale Weisshaar
Bus Operator - 2 years, August 2013

Shari Riddle
Scheduler - 2 years, September 2013

Ralph Goins
Bus Operator - 4 years, September 2011

Paul LaLonde - Interim Associate Director
Paul has been the VAC Assistant Director since April 2014 and the KAT Director since January 2010. He has recently accepted a position as the interim Associate Director within the Voluntary Action Center. Over the next several months, he will be working out of the Sycamore agency office to oversee additional VAC projects and programs and will still remain director of Kendall Area Transit.

Staff Spotlight

Name: Diannaha Thompson
Joined VAC/KAT: 2010
Position: Operations Manager

Before KAT: Worked as a secretary at Joliet Junior College in the Student Activities office.

Favorite Part of the Job: Getting to learn about and explore new areas of the county.

Most Rewarding Experience Thus Far: Being able to be a part of KAT since the beginning and getting to help with our first rides.

Hobbies: Taking pictures, doing crafts, being involved in her church and watching Doctor Who.
KAT Gets New Intern to Help with Travel Training

Hello, my name is Ali Millard. I started working with KAT the first week of September as a travel trainer intern. I recently graduated from Northern Illinois University with a degree in psychology and sociology. I am currently attending Aurora University perusing my Masters of Social Work degree. I have a history working with a transit service similar to KAT in a different county, and I have been able to experience the incredible difference a transit service makes in an individual’s life. I am very excited to be able to help people in Kendall county learn about the busses and the service we provide, so that we can make a difference in as many lives as possible. As a travel trainer, I will be educating the public on how to use the busses and KAT as a service, as well as providing information on how to travel to places outside our service area using different services like Metra or Pace. If you have any questions regarding our services or would like to set up a training event, I can be reached at traveltrainer@co.kendall.il.us or at (630) 882-6970. I look forward to getting to know the community and helping to bring awareness for a wonderful service!

Metra Leaders Meet to Discuss Services to Kendall County

Continued from page 6

A Metra official said the county would not necessarily have to join the RTA to get Metra service. Oberman said the possibility of intergovernmental agreements exists to provide service outside the RTA – even though it has not been done before.
"The challenge is to find the hundreds of millions of dollars it would take," Oberman said. "The challenge is not whether to join the RTA."

By the same token, Kendall officials admitted their constituents might not even want the service. If they do, they will have to pay for it, whether or not they join the RTA.
"If we decide this is something we want to pay for, we have to go to the residents and say, how do we pay for it?" Johnson said.
She added that the money earmarked to study rail service might better go toward a bridges study, or something like that, if that’s possible.

This article originally appeared in the Chicago Tribune on August 26th, 2015. It is written by Steve Lord.
On September 22nd, 2015 the KAT team traveled to Kankakee to pick up 4 new busses to add to the fleet! The new busses will replace 4 of our older vehicles, which will go from full time use to part-time backup use. The new busses will help us continue to provide the highest level of transportation services possible to the community. We look forward to getting the new busses stickered and out on the road!

Above: Bus Operators Ruben and Tony check out the new busses in Kankakee.

Left: Scheduler Susan is shown one of the new busses on September 22nd. A total of 4 KAT team members went to pick up the new busses and bring them back home to Yorkville.
KENDALL COUNTY LEGISLATIVE FORUM ON AGING & DISABILITY ISSUES

Free !!
Breakfast & Lunch
RSVP for Luncheon

Need a ride? Call KAT
(877) IGO-4KAT

☐ Trips must be booked a least 24 hours in advance!
☐ Must be registered. To register call above number!

MONDAY, November 9, 2015
Beecher Center, 908 Game Farm Road, Yorkville, IL
Doors Open at 9:00 A.M.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE:

9:00 Registration & Continental Breakfast
9:20 Welcome & Introductions
9:30-10:30 Program:

Community Living: The Crossroads of Legislation & Community Supports

Housing: A role for all to promote community living
Caregiving: Empowering families to care for loved ones
Transportation: Addressing a vital need for community living

10:30-11:15 Legislators Presentations
11:15-11:30 Questions from the audience to legislators
11:30 Luncheon – RSVP required by November 1st to receive lunch!

Lunch sponsored by Kendall County Senior Providers and Kendall County TRIAD
RSVP to (630) 553-5777 or (630)554-5602

Event Sponsored by:
KAT Holiday Schedule to Change Beginning July 1, 2015

ATTENTION ALL RIDERS

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2015

SERVICE CHANGE TO HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Beginning July 1, 2015, we will no longer be offering limited service on select holidays. All KAT operations will be closed on the following holidays:

- New Year’s Day
- President’s Day
- Memorial Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Eve
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Independence Day
- Columbus Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

More transit information can be found on the KAT website at www.co.kendall.il.us or by calling (630) 882-6970.
Late Executive Director of VAC Honored by Illinois Public Transportation Association

Illinois Public Transportation Association Honors VAC’s Late Executive Director with the Thomas F. Zucker Award for the Advancement of Rural Public Transportation

The Voluntary Action Center’s (VAC) late executive director was a driving force in expanding rural community and public transportation throughout DeKalb and Kendall Counties, as well as across the State.

Tom Zucker was a former Board Member, and past president, of the Illinois Public Transportation Association (IPTA), as well as being actively involved in the Rural Transit Assistance Center (RTAC) as an advisory board member and planning liaison.

As a way to honor Tom’s achievements, the IPTA Board created the Thomas F. Zucker Award for the Advancement of Rural Public Transportation. Tom was posthumously awarded the honor at this year’s 2015 IPTA conference in September. In attendance to accept the award on Tom’s behalf was his family.

The award will be awarded in the future to individuals that have had a significant impact on rural public transportation in Illinois.

Laura Calderon, executive director of IPTA, said Tom’s passing was a huge loss for the public transportation community in Illinois. “Tom’s contribution to the advancement of public transportation in his community and across the State of Illinois was tremendous. His passing has left a hole in our organization that simply can’t be filled,” she stated.

“Knowing Tom, he certainly would have been humbled by this award and would advise us all to keep trucking along,” said Paul LaLonde, acting associate director at VAC. “Helping people was his passion, which is why community and public transportation was his passion. He understood as well as anyone what transportation programs mean to the community.”

VAC looks forward to continuing Tom’s legacy by addressing the transportation needs of seniors, individuals with disabilities, and other transit dependent persons. As TransVAC, MedVAC, and KAT continue to grow and expand, the residents of DeKalb and Kendall Counties remain the chief benefactors of these services.
KAT Travel Training Program

What is Travel Training?
Travel training is a self-paced process that teaches KAT riders how to safely and independently use the public bus. Travel destinations are the trainee’s choice and can include: work, school, medical appointments, and recreation sites.

Who Should Participate?
Any rider in need of assistance and those who wish to become more independent. Your residence and destination should be in the KAT designated service area.

Costs:
Travel training is provided free-of-charge except for your bus fare while training is taking place.

Training Process:
A mobility instructor will travel with you to your desired destination at times of your convenience. The instructor will stay with you, teaching you KAT procedures, skills, and techniques for safe travel. Training is conducted in a series of steps from initial one-on-one instruction to the gradual fading of trainer assistance leading to independent travel. A trainer will stay with you until you feel comfortable and confident riding the bus.

Benefits of Travel Training:
- Enhances freedom, mobility and independence.
- Provides access to safe and low-cost transportation.
- Increases self-confidence.
- Promotes healthy living by helping you stay active in the community.

KAT Travel Trainers Can Teach You:
- How to plan your trip
- How to get to and from your bus
- How to recognize bus numbers, bus stops, and landmarks
- How to pay fares and purchase tickets and passes
- How to board with a mobility device
- Where to position your mobility device on the bus
- How to prepare for the unexpected
- How to read and understand route maps and schedules

Don’t wait. Your road to independence can start today!

1. **Call KAT** at (630) 882-6970 to learn more about our Travel Training Program.
2. **Schedule an appointment** with our Travel Trainer for a travel needs assessment.