

The Update



August 2026

Serving the Counties of Cass, Fremont, Harrison, Montgomery, Mills, Page, Pottawattamie, and Shelby

SWITA Meets Demand for Student Transportation Across the Region



SWITA buses wait for students to board on the first day of classes in Atlantic.

August 24, 2026

SWI- Getting the kids to school safely and reliably is always a priority for parents when the new school year rolls around. School districts do a great job of meeting the demand for students outside of city limits but for some of the larger communities in our region it can be a decent distance to get to school from inside city limits. That's where Southwest Iowa Transit Agency has stepped in to meet a need. SWITA

operates student transportation in Atlantic, Glenwood, Harlan, and Red Oak that is paid for by parents or caregivers. The transit team takes great pride in giving parents in those communities a reliable option to get students to school and back home. The service is open to the public.

The popularity of the service has continued to grow with SWITA providing 64,996 rides in fiscal year 2026. It's a big undertaking for the staff and Continued..

In this Issue

- SWITA Meets Demand for Student Transportation....1-2
- SWIPCO Welcomes New Planner Noah Hirayama.....3
- Housing Team Helps Complete Creston Project.....4-5
- SWIPCO Annual Meeting Coming in September.....5
- Iowa DOT Wants Feedback on Transportation Plan...6
- Birthdays & Anniversaries; Grant Opportunities....7
- From the Executive Director.....8

Student Transportation continued...

drivers to prepare for student transportation each year and registrations continue to roll in after the start of classes. Registrations have to be entered, routes have to be created and coordinated, and drivers have to learn and execute those routes. A great deal of communication takes place between staff, parents, and school districts to make sure that routes can run as efficiently as possible.

As you can imagine, there are always variables that make these routes different all the time. School time changes with early-outs or late starts, kids being ill, address changes, different drop-off locations needed. It's a big undertaking but the SWITA team does a great job of trying to meet the unique needs of each day.

Here's to another great school year!



Students being organized for boarding on the first day of classes in Atlantic. August 24, 2026.



SWITA by the Numbers

	July 2026	YTD (Since July 1)
Total Miles	177,806	177,806
Total Hours	7,789	7,789
Total Rides	46,160	46,160
<u>July Rides by Service</u>		<u>July Rides by Demographic</u>
Workforce Rides	7,267	Disabled 27,616
Taxi Rides	4,295	Elderly 2,462
Student Rides	0	Other Gen. Public 16,082
Other	34,598	

Noah Hirayama Joins SWIPCO Planning Team

ATLANTIC- Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) recently welcomed a new member to the staff. Noah Hirayama has joined the Community Development team as a Planner. This position will expand SWIPCO's capacity to serve our clients, the cities and counties of the region. Some areas that Noah will bolster include grant applications and management for infrastructure and housing projects, hazard mitigation planning, city zoning, comprehensive and strategic planning, and regional transportation planning.

Hirayama is from the Des Moines area and recently graduated from Iowa State University with a degree in Community and Regional Planning. He originally started his education in computer science but switched gears after a brief pause. Hirayama said it was actually video games that exposed him to planning as a profession, "I took an interest in city development video games. A lot of people are familiar with Sim City but I also played another game called City Skylines. One of the online players of that game went by CityPlannerPlays in his user-name. That's when I first was exposed to the idea that city planning and development was a profession I could pursue."



Hirayama says he always has had an interest in maps and looking at data so that also matched up well with the career pathway. He spent time as an IT Specialist with Amazon and interned at three different operations: working GIS at Paces, roadside development with the Iowa DOT, and planning with the Polk County Housing Trust Fund.

In looking for a position following school Hirayama said he wanted to find a proper planning job, "When I found this position it was a great opportunity for a well rounded planning job. Some entry opportunities are focused on a certain area but this position works with a lot of different things. I also was particularly interested in Councils of Governments like SWIPCO because they work with multiple communities and counties."

Hirayama has family based out of Iowa and Hawaii and has 6 siblings that are spread out. He has a strong interest in soccer and competed collegiately for one year at Central College.

If your county or community has needs that can be served by the SWIPCO Planning team then please reach out anytime to see how they can help. You can contact Noah Hirayama or Lead Planner Dani Briggs at the office at 712-243-4196 or 866-279-4720.

SWIPCO Helps Creston Complete Repairs for Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Grant

CRESTON- The Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) Housing team recently reached beyond our typical region to assist the City of Creston with a special project. Creston received a Comprehensive Neighborhood Revitalization Grant from the Iowa Economic Development Authority to perform home repairs in a specified area of town. Creston resides in the coverage region of the Southern Iowa Council of Governments (SICOG) but they needed staffing assistance to complete the project. SWIPCO had the infrastructure in place with our Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund team to tackle the project.

Creston was awarded the CNRG in early 2024 and the scope of neighborhood improvements is wide ranging including housing, streetlights, a linear park, uptown plaza, stormwater infrastructure, pedestrian pathways, and more. SWIPCO was brought on to provide technical services for the housing repair piece in early 2025 which was then followed by obtaining and verifying applicants, inspecting, receiving bids, and then construction.

Two owner-occupied homes and one rental unit were rehabbed during the project with a total of \$83,100 of investment. The home featured in the before and after photos in this story received a new porch, shingles, soffit/fascia, gutters, siding/paint, metal wrap/door trim, windows, doors, and a sidewalk.



Before and after pictures of repairs made to 306 1/2 N Elm Street in Creston as part of the CNRG project.

You can see from these results the transformational impact this project is making on the area and SWIPCO is proud to have aided this work. We look forward to seeing the full scope of work completed for the neighborhood.

Creston CNRG Continued...

The SWIPCO Housing team tackles home repair projects year-round through the Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund across seven counties. Those projects are funded through a variety of grants such as the Iowa Finance Authority, Federal Home Loan Bank, Iowa West Foundation and more.

If you have any questions about the housing repair program, contact Ann Anstey or Nicole Rhodes at 712-243-4196 or 866-279-4720.



09.24.26

SWIPCO ANNUAL MEETING AND AWARDS



WALNUT COMMUNITY CENTER
415 ANTIQUE CITY DRIVE
WALNUT, IA
LUNCH, PROGRAM, AND AWARDS
STARTS AT 12:00 P.M.

WE ARE LOOKING FORWARD TO CELEBRATING
ANOTHER YEAR OF SERVICE TO SOUTHWEST IOWA.

CITY, COUNTY, AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL
REPRESENTATIVES ARE INVITED TO REGISTER TO
ATTEND THROUGH THE LINK ON THE HOMEPAGE AT
WWW.SWIPCO.ORG OR USE THE QR CODE ABOVE.



Iowa DOT Seeks Input on Future Transportation Plans



IOWA | DOT

We want to hear from you!

Scan the QR code to fill out a short survey about the future of transportation in Iowa.

iowadot.gov/FutureTravel

Transportation Survey

Your ideas will help make Iowa's transportation system even better.

Sus ideas ayudarán a mejorar aún más el sistema de transporte de Iowa.

Encuesta de Transporte

Khảo sát về Giao thông vận tải

Những ý kiến của quý vị sẽ giúp hệ thống giao thông của Iowa ngày càng tốt hơn.

Vos idées contribueront à améliorer davantage le système de transport de l'Iowa.

Enquête sur les transports

Utafiti wa Usafiri

Maoni yako yatasaidia kuboresha mfumo wa usafiri wa Iowa.

Makakatulong ang mga ideya mo na gawing mas mahusay ang sistema ng transportasyon ng Iowa.

Survey sa Transportasyon

交通狀況問卷調查

您的想法有助於讓Iowa州的交通系統更加出色。

ستساعد أفكارك في جعل نظام النقل في ولاية آيوا أفضل.

دراسة استقصائية حول النقل

MM1598 07/09/2026

Birthdays & Anniversaries

**Chris Parks**

Communications Coordinator

3 Years of Service

Birthday Month

**Phil Richter**

Building Inspector I

Birthday Month

**Julie Hays**

Transit Scheduler I

Birthday Month

**John McCurdy**

Executive Director

Birthday Month

**Barb Boggs**

Grants Specialist I

3 Years of Service

**Mark Lander**

Transit Director

12 Years of Service

**Kristen Templeton**

Transit Operations Manager

12 Years of Service

Upcoming Grant

Information:

- Alliant Energy Foundation
September 15, 2026
- Iowa Certified Local Government (CLG) Grant
September 21, 2026
- Water Recreation Access Cost-Share Program (WRAC)
September 30, 2026
- Federal Recreational Trails
October 1, 2026
- Wastewater & Drinking Water Treatment Financial Assistance
November
- Community Catalyst
Pre-Apps Due in January
- Small Business Energy Audit Program
May 1, 2029 (Ongoing, first-come basis until funds exhausted)

From the Desk of the Executive Director

John McCurdy

If you're interested in what SWIPCO does and are available to be in Walnut at noon on September 24, I strongly encourage you to attend SWIPCO's annual meeting. It's free and there is an excellent meal planned and it is a great opportunity to hear first hand about our programs and speak to one of the staff about your community's needs.

Our cover story today is about our student transportation, which is an area in which SWITA excels and is also something that I think that many families in our region assume is universal. That's not the case. It is actually fairly uncommon for rural transit agencies to provide student transportation. In some areas the yellow school buses serve the whole community, so there is no need for the transit agency to provide that service. And it's a very hard service to coordinate because it's very busy—but just twice a day. Also, transporting students is difficult for all the reasons any school bus driver would be able to tell you! So, a lot of our sister agencies just don't do it. However, it is an example of one of the services that we know from experience is very much needed in our region and we are committed to it. With time, families have come to know and rely on SWITA for their student transportation needs and that helps keep demand up and make the service affordable and sustainable. We all want to wish all of our students, their families, and all the school employees a very safe and happy 2026-2027 school year!

Finally, a warm welcome to our newest regional planner, Noah Hirayama. We look forward to him getting well acquainted with the communities in our region and to help us meet the strong demand for quality service in the SWIPCO region. Welcome Noah!

SWIPCO STAFF			
John McCurdy, AICP Executive Director	Kersten Abild Transit Scheduler II	Tracy Clark Transit Scheduler III	Chris Parks Communications Coordinator
Mark Lander Transit Director	Ann Anstey Housing Programs Coordinator	Tammy DeBord Community Development Grants Manager	Nicole Rhodes Grants Specialist II
Daurine Petersen Administrative Services Director	Mary Auten Grants Specialist I	Mark Hansen Fleet Mechanic	Phil Richter Building Inspector I
Rhonda Brown Finance Manager	Michael Ballinger Safety Coordinator	Julie Hays Transit Scheduler I	Kyle Rock Maintenance Assistant
Brandie McFarland Human Resources Specialist	Barb Boggs Grants Specialist I	Noah Hirayama Community Development Specialist I	Kristen Templeton Transit Operations Manager
	Dani Briggs Planning Manager	Dee Holtz Administrative Assistant	Teresa Wright Finance Specialist
		Matthew Lee Building Inspector II	