

The Update



June 2026

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

SWITA Receives Top Honors at Iowa Public Transit Association Conference

ALTOONA, IA – Southwest Iowa Transit Agency (SWITA), operated by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) has once again been named the Iowa Department of Transportation’s Regional Transit System of the Year. The award was announced during the Iowa Public Transit Association Annual Awards at Prairie Meadows in Altoona on Thursday, June 18th. This marks the fourth year in a row that SWITA has been honored for this award, a new benchmark milestone.

The Iowa DOT Award is based on several factors meant to represent ridership and efficiency. Some of the factors include overall ridership, ridership per capita, percentage of ridership increase, and cost efficiency of rides provided. SWITA has earned this award again due to strong ridership numbers while being the most cost-efficient system in the state.



SWITA team with awards at IPTA Annual Conference in Altoona (L-R: Transit Director Mark Lander, Transit Scheduler Tracy Clark, Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton, Communications Coordinator Chris Parks

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SWITA Transit Director Mark Lander said, “It’s a great honor to stand out amongst all the great regional transit systems in the state. It takes a lot of hard work, day in and day out, from all our team to reach the ridership and efficiency marks we have. This takes everyone from the staff, the drivers, the shop, the board, and other supporters. We take pride in getting Southwest Iowans where Continued..

Awards continued...

they need to go.”

In Fiscal Year 2025 SWITA provided 546,745 rides, traveling 2, 018,066 miles, totaling 113,122 hours on the road. SWITA transportation is accessible to everyone in the eight-county region, including the disabled and elderly. SWITA offers several transportation options including work routes, medical trips, student transportation, taxi service in six communities, and special trips. SWITA vehicles are equipped with wheelchair accessibility and one personal attendant rides free.

SWITA Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton said, “Receiving the Regional Transit System of the Year award is an honor for all of us at SWITA/SWIPCO. Our team works hard daily to keep the wheels turning and provide transit services throughout Southwest Iowa. Our goal is to connect people needing reliable transportation to the services that matter most to them. Providing trips is what we do and serving our area communities is our mission.”

SWITA Driver of the Year Leon Zaiger was also recognized at the IPTA Driver Awards Dinner on Friday, June 19th at the Prairie Meadows Pavilion in Altoona. Top drivers from across the state were recognized for their great work and many drivers stayed to participate in the IPTA Driver Rodeo on Saturday, June 20th.



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SWITA Dispatcher Earns Top Accolade

ALTOONA, IA- Southwest Iowa Transit Agency's Tracy Clark was recently selected as the Iowa Transit Dispatcher of the Year by the Iowa Public Transit Association (IPTA). Clark received her award and was recognized at IPTA's Annual Conference and Awards at Prairie Meadows in Altoona on Thursday, June 18th.

The Dispatcher of the Year award is given to a public transit employee who has made a significant impact to the transit agency as a dispatcher, trainer, or dispatcher supervisor/manager. Tracy was nominated for her work aiding drivers with logging, assisting in fleet management, working on required reporting with the Iowa Department of Transportation, and fulfilling many other roles. She has worked for SWITA for nearly seven years and has been praised by management for her willingness to adapt to different duties and learn new systems.

SWITA Transit Director Mark Lander said, "This is a well-deserved honor, Tracy is an indispensable part of the SWITA team. She goes above and beyond on a daily basis and is always ready and willing to jump in and help solve problems when they arise!"

SWITA Transit Coordinator Kristen Templeton added, "Tracy is a devoted part of transit. She consistently demonstrates professionalism and makes handing off a task smooth and efficient. Reliable in completing assignments, willing to assist and provide coverage when asked."

The entire organization was also honored to be named the Iowa DOT's Regional System of the Year at the conference for the fourth straight year. SWITA takes great pride in getting Southwest Iowans where they need to go in an efficient manner.



L-R: IPTA Board Member Amy Fortenbacher, IPTA Executive Director Carl Lingen, SWITA Transit Scheduler Tracy Clark.

SWIPCO
A Bright Look Ahead™

SWITA

Celebrating 250 Years of Independence

SWIPCO/SWITA Offices will be closed July 3, 2026

Atlantic Taxi is the only SWITA service running on July 3rd and no SWITA services on July 4th

Iowa West Funds Help SWIHTF Tackle Housing Repair Throughout the Region

SOUTHWEST IOWA – Grant funds from the Iowa West Foundation play a vital role in helping Southwest Iowa Housing Trust Fund (SWIHTF), operated by Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO), complete important home repairs for residents in need throughout the region. The SWIHTF implements a number of other grant funds to address these repairs and the Iowa West Foundation Home Repair Grant helps get many projects to the finish line.

For the Fiscal Year 2026 Grant, SWIHTF worked on repairs for 18 homes, spread across 8 different communities. \$150,000 of Iowa West Funds were poured into these homes to supplement approximately \$240,000 of other grant funds for a total of \$390,000 worth of repair work.

Of the 18 households assisted, 8 of them included an elderly resident and 3 of them included a disabled resident. A major goal of the SWIHTF is to help residents remain safely in their homes. Oftentimes it is even more difficult for our elderly and disabled population to achieve that goal, highlighting the importance of the home repair program.

Ultimately, at the end of this Iowa West Foundation Home Repair Grant, 38 Southwest Iowa residents were impacted with a safer and more efficient living environment.

One of the repair recipients stated, “I never expected this project to be completed when it did. I thank god for the warm February weather and such nice people to work with.”

SWIHTF is grateful for the partnership with the Iowa West Foundation, which makes more projects feasible and in turn positively impacts more residents of Southwest Iowa.

If you have a need for your home and would like information about what assistance could be provided and the process involved, please contact SWIPCO at 712-243-4196 or 1-866-279-4720.



Before and after of housing repair project using Iowa West Foundation funds

SWIPCO Communities Receive \$1.3 Million in CDBG Awards

Southwest Iowa Planning Council (SWIPCO) is proud to announce that all of the applications that SWIPCO submitted for the latest round of Water and Sewer Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Awards were funded. The Iowa Economic Development Authority recently announced their awards which include a water project in Elk Horn and sewer projects in Henderson and Defiance.

The City of Henderson was awarded a \$323,635 grant for lagoon work to resolve a Department of Natural Resources violation. The city uses a collection system and a three cell controlled discharge lagoon system. After evaluating the current facilities it was determined that the primary cell is functioning properly but the integrity of the secondary cells clay liners are inadequate. This project will pay for re-compaction of the clay soil liner and sludge removal in the secondary cells.

The City of Elk Horn was awarded \$500,000 for well and water treatment upgrades. Elk Horn operates their water supply off a series of shallow wells and has struggled to keep up with peak demand. The overall project will include updates to the existing well field, rehabilitation of the aerator and detention tank, and replacement of some aging pipes.

The City of Defiance was awarded \$500,000 for lagoon work to resolve a Department of Natural Resources violation. The current system has not been able to keep up with wastewater loads from users. This project will address their sewer issues by expanding the existing 2-celled discharge lagoon system to a three-celled controlled discharge lagoon system. This will include replacement of all flow control structures, pipes, and valves to allow for more efficient operations.



Elk Horn Water Treatment Plant during a previous project

Atlantic Rock Island Depot to Get Updates Through Iowa Rural Heritage Revitalization Grant

ATLANTIC- Atlantic's historic Rock Island Depot, which serves as the home for the Atlantic Area Chamber of Commerce, is set to get some updates thanks to a \$71,609 Iowa Rural Heritage Revitalization Grant award from the Iowa Economic Development Authority (IEDA). Eight historic properties are receiving \$750,000 for restoration across the state.

The depot project will address masonry damage and water infiltration. The work will include brick replacement, tuck-pointing, window stabilization, and restoration of interior walls. The facility has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1994.

Southwest Iowa Planning Council aided the Atlantic Rock Island Society Enterprise (ARISE) in the application process. The project will have to follow federal preservation standards and be completed by July 31, 2027.

The state's distributed funds come from the National Park Service's Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Program.



SWITA by the Numbers

	April 2026	YTD (Since July 1)	May 2026	YTD (Since July 1)
Total Miles	151,972	1,633,220	181,269	1,814,489
Total Hours	9,271	91,242	9,042	100,284
Total Rides	34,109	425,095	53,396	478,491

April Rides by Service

Workforce Rides	8,640
Taxi Rides	4,874
Student Rides	7,674
Other	12,921

April Rides by Demographic

Disabled	9,991
Elderly	2,534
Other General Public	21,584

May Rides by Service

Workforce Rides	8,105
Taxi Rides	4,679
Student Rides	5,158
Other	35,454

May Rides by Demographic

Disabled	32,482
Elderly	2,484
Other General Public	18,430

Birthdays & Anniversaries



Matthew Lee
Building Inspector II
7 Years of Service



Rhonda Brown
Finance Director
9 Years of Service



Kersten Abild
Transit Scheduler II
Birthday Month

SWITA Summer Fun Bus

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\$40 FOR AN UNLIMITED SUMMER PASS**

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Upcoming Grant

Information:

- Iowa DNR Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program
August 15, 2026
- CDBG Commercial Façades Program
August 17, 2026
- CDBG Upper-Story Rehabilitation Program
August 17, 2026
- CDBG Community Facilities
August 17, 2026
- CDBG Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Fund
September 1, 2026
- Revitalize Iowa's Sound Economy (RISE)
September 1, 2026
- Alliant Energy Foundation
September 15, 2026
- Water Recreation Access Cost-Share Program (WRAC)
September 30, 2026
- Small Business Energy Audit Program
May 1, 2029 (Ongoing, first-come basis until funds exhausted)

From the Desk of the Executive Director

John McCurdy

Recently, my father-in-law got his brake pedal and gas pedal mixed up and put his F-150 into the side of a Casey's store in Omaha. This has initiated a lot of conversations between my wife and her siblings about whether or not their dad should be driving. In our society, transportation independence is often a big part of our identities and the thought of losing it is a major blow to both physical and mental health. It's a hot button topic and discussing changes in that independence are difficult and sensitive.

As the recognition of SWITA as Iowa's top regional transit agency shows, we're trying our best in Southwest Iowa to give all of our residents options for transportation if driving either isn't possible or is not the preferred option. Often, the only barrier to SWITA service is perception—the perception that it is only for the elderly or disabled, the perception that you have to be pre-qualified to ride, or the perception that it's only available to a few. In reality, the service is very flexible and we're more than happy to help in a wide variety of ways. Many of you who read this newsletter are local government officials and I strongly encourage you to think about how public transportation can help those who can't/don't drive in your community and if you see any issues, reach out and let's help you find solutions!

This month's newsletter also highlights several grants that were secured by SWIPCO for communities and organizations in our region. That's a great reminder that for our member cities and counties, we are your grant writer—take advantage of it! Often the grant writing itself is free, unless there are expenses directly involved such as mailing out surveys or things of that nature. Ideally, we don't like to hear about a project right before a grant deadline (though it happens). If you have a project going on, or are thinking of a project, let us know and we're happy to meet to put together a customized funding plan so we are all working together off the same script and can bundle as many resources as possible.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy Independence Day, the 250th!

SWIPCO STAFF

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Transit Director

Daurine Petersen
Administrative Services Director

Rhonda Brown
Finance Manager

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Michael Ballinger
Safety Coordinator

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Grants Specialist I

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Lead Planner

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